





UNIVERSITY  
OF VICTORIA  
LIBRARY











THE  
A C T O R:  
A  
T R E A T I S E



THE  
ACTOR:  
A  
TREATISE  
ON THE  
ART OF PLAYING.

Interspersed with  
Theatrical Anecdotes, Critical Remarks  
on PLAYS, and Occasional Observations  
on AUDIENCES.

---

*Quod verum atque decens  
Curo & rogo, & omnis in hoc sum.*

HOR.

---

L O N D O N :

Printed for R. GRIFFITHS, at the *Dunciad*, in  
St. Paul's Church-yard. MDCCL.

BENJAMIN BLOM, INC.  
*Publishers*, New York 1971

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA  
LIBRARY  
Victoria, B. C.

First Published 1750  
Reissued 1969 by  
Benjamin Blom, Inc., Bronx, New York 10452  
and 56 Doughty Street, London, W.C. 1

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 79-91522

Printed in the United States of America

---

---

TO THE  
MANAGERS  
OF THE  
TWO THEATRES.

GENTLEMEN,

**A**N author unknown to you, and who shall ever remain so, takes the liberty of laying before you an essay on the rules and laws of a profession, which it is greatly your Interest to be acquainted with in its utmost latitude. That you are at present perfectly informed of the full extent of many of them, we have, during the course of the last Season, had abundant proof; there are, however, some more essential ones, which those who frequent the performances you exhibit, imagine have not sufficiently taken up your attention.

You will find we have pass'd the more cursorily over the former, that we might,

## DEDICATION.

in a treatise not intended to tire you with its length, have room to expatiate as much as should be necessary on the others.

The great principle we have laid down in this work is, That to be qualified to judge, a man must be unprejudic'd; and we flatter ourselves that it will appear we are so in an eminent degree: you will here find a great deal of justly-merited praise, together with much as justly-merited censure. We hope we speak in both not only our own sense of the matter, but that of your audiences in general. We shall be glad to find the just praise we have bestowed on the more deserving, heightening in them that honest pride which is the surest guardian of their fame, and the noblest incentive to engage their attention to the real ornaments of their profession: and if, on the other hand, our censure may prevent those who are incapable of playing interesting characters, from engaging for the future in so romantick a pursuit of praise, even tho' the ignorance, or the private views, of a Manager, should tempt them to do so, our views will be fully answer'd.

But



## DEDICATION.

But the good effects of our admonitions we expect to receive, Gentlemen, more immediately from you: we see you at the head of companies, in each of which there are many actors of great merit, some of moderate merit, and some of no merit at all: we hope we shall make it appear that your own interests, as well as our satisfaction, require it of you to do hereafter what we are almost ashamed to mention, as a thing yet to be done,——to proportion, in every representation, the burthen to the shoulders that are to bear it, and to give us, in the best characters, the best players you have for them.

You cannot be uninform'd that Mons. *Sainte Albine* some years ago gave laws to the *French stage*, which were founded on nature and reason, and therefore very unexceptionable: we know they were coolly received indeed by the players, but the audiences thought so well of them, that they interested themselves to see many of them put in execution; and the immediate consequence was, the raising that theatre to a degree of reputation it never did, nor ever cou'd have risen

## DEDICATION.

to without them. What *St. Albine* laid before the *French* audiences, we submit to the opinion of the Managers of the *British* theatres; we know, Gentlemen, that no body is so able to judge of the merits of our observations as you are, and we flatter ourselves, that when you are convinced 'tis your interest to consider things in the light in which we represent them, you will not fail to give them your sanction, by introducing them into practice. You have now a long vacation before you, to consider of these things in; and we hope to see the future emulation between you, exerting itself not in disputing who shall have most good performers in pay, but who shall employ them most adequately to their talents, most to their own honour, and to the satisfaction of their audiences.

If this prove the consequence, we shall not be solicitous of telling the world to whom they are indebted for giving you these hints; or you, who it is that has taken so much pains to prove himself,

*Gentlemen,*

*Your very sincere Friend,*

*and obedient humble Servant:*

---

---

T H E

# CONTENTS.

P A R T the FIRST.

**O***F the principal Advantages which a Player ought to have from Nature.* Pag. 1

B O O K I.

*In which many of the common Prejudices of the Age are considered, and Observations made on the necessary Qualifications of Performers on the Stage in general.* 3

**CHAP. I.** *Can an Actor excel in his Profession without a good Understanding?* ibid.

C H A P. II.

*Of Sensibility. Whether this Quality of the Heart be more important to the Performers in Tragedy or in Comedy?* 14

C H A P. III.

*Whether an Actor can have too much Fire?* 28

C H A P. IV.

*Whether it wou'd be to the Advantage of all Players to be of a distinguished Figure?* 52

B O O K. II.

*Of the Advantages in which it is requisite that those Players who play the capital Parts, should be superior to those who perform the subordinate Characters.* 88

S E C T. I.

*Of the interior Qualifications which an Audience requires in the Players who perform the capital Parts.* 89

## THE CONTENTS.

CHAP. I. *A gaiety of Temper is absolutely necessary to the Players in Comedy, whose Business it is to make us laugh.* Pag. 89

### CHAP. II.

*No Man who has not naturally an elevated Soul, will ever perform well the Part of a Heroe upon the Stage.* 96

### CHAP. III.

*As all Players have occasion for the great Quality of Sensibility; those in a particular manner who propose to themselves to succeed in drawing Tears from us, have more Necessity than any others for that peculiar kind of it, which we sometimes express by the Word Tenderness, tho' more strongly by the appropriated Term Feeling.* 106

### CHAP. IV.

*Players who are naturally amorous, are the only ones who should perform the Parts of Lovers upon the Stage.* 115

### CHAP. V.

*Which is a Corollary to the foregoing Chapter.* 125

### SECT. II.

*Of those Qualifications which, when they fall to the Share of that Class of Actors spoken of in the Second Book, peculiarly interest the Senses of an Audience.* 127

CHAP. I. *That Sort of Voice which may be very adequate to certain Characters, may be by no means sufficient for the Actor, in Parts by which we are to be peculiarly moved and affected.* ibid.

### CHAP. II.

*An Audience expects to find in the Person who acts the Part of a Lover in Comedy, an amiable Figure; and in him who acts the Part of a Heroe in Tragedy, a majestic and striking one.* 132

### CHAP.



## The CONTENTS.

### CHAP. III.

*Of the real or apparent Conformity there ought to be between the Age of the Actor and that of the Person represented.* Page 147

### CHAP. IV.

*Of the Characters of Footmen and Chambermaids on the Stage.* 149

## PART the SECOND.

*Of those Assistances which Players ought to receive from Art.* 153

CHAP. I. *In what the Truth of a Representation on the Stage consists.* 156

### CHAP. II.

*On the Truth of Action on the Stage.* 158

### CHAP. III.

*Observations on the two principal Things essential to the Truth of Action.* 164

### CHAP. IV.

*On the Truth of Recitation.* 179

### CHAP. V.

*What ought to be the Manner of Recitation in Comedy.* 187

### CHAP. VI.

*Whether Tragedy ought or ought not to be spoke in a declamatory manner.* 193

### CHAP. VII.

*Of certain Obstacles which impair the Truth of the Recitation.* 197

### CHAP. VIII.

*Of the Care that ought to be taken perfectly to implant the Parts of a Play in the Actor's Memory, in order to its being play'd with Truth.* 213

### CHAP. IX.

*Containing a Digression concerning certain Articles, which in themselves are foreign to theatrical Representation;*

## The CONTENTS.

<i>presentation ; yet without which the Truth of aëting is never to be arrived at</i>	Page 220
C H A P. X.	
<i>In which some important Rules are added to the Principles before establish'd, of the Truth of Action and Recitation.</i>	229
C H A P. XI.	
<i>Of natural Playing.</i>	232
C H A P. XII.	
<i>Of the Finesses in the Art of Playing in general.</i>	246
C H A P. XIII.	
<i>Of the Finesses in playing, which peculiarly belong to Tragedy.</i>	258
C H A P. XIV.	
<i>Of the Finesses in playing, peculiar to Comedy.</i>	269
C H A P. XV.	
<i>Rules which ought to be observ'd in the use of Finesses.</i>	279
C H A P. XVI.	
<i>Of Bye-play, or what are called Stage-Tricks.</i>	284
C H A P. XVII.	
<i>Of Variety in Playing.</i>	288
C H A P. XVIII.	
<i>Of graces in Playing.</i>	300
C H A P. XIX.	
<i>Observations on some Parts of the Art of Playing, of a subordinate Kind to those we have hitherto been treating of.</i>	307
C H A P. XX.	
OBJECTIONS.	315
C H A P. XXI.	
<i>Some Remarks which may be of Service to certain modern Actors.</i>	318



THE  
A C T O R.

PART the FIRST.

*Of the principal Advantages which a Player  
ought to have from Nature.*

A MONG the many arts which should never be exercis'd but by persons who are happy in a variety of natural accomplishments, there are few, to the excelling in which they are more essential, than in performing well in tragedy and comedy. The Actor is expected to delude the imagination, and to affect the heart: and in order to his attaining to perfection in this difficult task, nature must have been assistant to him in an uncommon manner.

It is essential to our being rationaly pleas'd with theatrical representations, that the performers to whom the principal parts are allotted, perfectly keep up the illusion we are to be entertained with ; as it is peculiarly from them, that we expect what is to move and affect us.

These performers, therefore, more than all the rest, ought to be selected from among persons, whom nature has particularly favour'd.

In enquiring what are the natural endowments immediately necessary to *performers on the stage in general*, we shall endeavour to discuss certain preliminary points, which have not hitherto been properly or sufficiently explain'd ; and thence proceed to examine, what are the peculiar qualifications necessary to *particular actors*.

Perhaps it would not be easy to do the publick a more acceptable service on the subject of these entertainments, than by informing those who are ambitious to appear in the capital parts of our plays, (tho' nature has deny'd them the necessary means) that it is impossible to succeed in so ill-judg'd an attempt.

This we shall endeavour to explain, in the second book of this first part.





## B O O K I.

*In which many of the common Prejudices of the Age are considered; and Observations made on the necessary Qualifications of Performers on the Stage in general.*

## C H A P. I.

*Can an Actor excell in his Profession, without a good Understanding?*

A Thing is not always the more true, because it is generally affirm'd. We frequently hear people who pretend to be the best judges of dramatic performances, declare that some of the modern actors, who have a general and not wholly undeserv'd applause, have mean understandings: But we flatter ourselves, it may be easily proved, that either the actors, whom these severe criticks censure, have more sense than they have the discernment to distinguish in them; or that they have less merit, even than they allow them, and have the good fortune to be esteem'd much better performers, than they really are.

It is not easy to avoid the allowing a good understanding, even to persons who excel in arts that are merely mechanick; and surely the accomplish'd actor, if he have no other title to it than that of his being such, ought not to be de-

ny'd the same concession. Is it possible that a man can, in a series of different parts, continually command our applause, if he have not a just and distinguishing apprehension, to give him at all times, and always with propriety, the necessary admonitions for his just deportment under every circumstance of every one of them? and indeed, if he have not a nice discernment to perceive the affinities of things, and the dependances of the incidents on one another? for this must ever be the directing needle that points out the invariable pole, both to the poet and performer.

It is not enough to entitle a player to our applause, that he remembers every striking incident, every beauty in his part; 'tis equally necessary, that he distinguish the true, the exact manner, under which every single beauty must be represented. It is not sufficient that he knows how to raise his passion, he must know how to raise it by just rules, and to assign it its peculiar bounds and height, according to the degree the circumstances of his part require; below which it must not sink, and beyond which it must not rise.

It is not sufficient that his figure be in general good and proper for the stage; and that his face can mark the changes of his soul: we shall be dissatisfied with him if his person be not always kept in a proper attitude; and shall quarrel even with the expression of his countenance if it do not regulate itself at every circumstance, not only to the passion, but to the degree of the passion it is to describe to us.

It is not only essential to his success that he never let a passage which he delivers, lose the least part of its force, or of its delicacy, in his speaking it:

it: when he has thus given it all the justice imaginable, he must add to that all the graces that a study'd delivery and action can bestow on it. He is not to content himself with following his author strictly and faithfully; but in many places, he must assist and support him; he must even in some instances become a sort of author himself; \* he must know not only how to give the proper expression to every finesse the poet has thrown into his part, but he must frequently add new ones; and not only execute, but create graces. A start, a gesture, nay, a mere attention, properly employ'd, are often of as happy effect as a brilliant piece of wit in comedy, or a noble sentiment in tragedy; a peculiar cadence in the actor's voice, or a bare pause artfully thrown in, have frequently produc'd applause from a sentence, which if it had been delivered by an inferior performer, would not have had any attention paid to it by the hearers.

The art of exciting the passions in an audience by the performer's raising them in himself, with a judgment and exactness proportion'd justly to the several circumstances, is at least as difficult to arrive at, as that of giving its due force, or true delicacy, to every passage. The poet who has made himself a master of the power of commanding the passions and throwing the soul into every degree of them that he pleases, exerts his utmost efforts in vain, and uses every art without success, when the actor does not join his skill to the raising the effects he intends by them. When even a

\* The truth of this assertion will be made evident, when we come to speak of the finesses in the art of the player, in the second part of this work.

good part falls into bad hands, it is no uncommon thing to see the audience laugh, where the author meant to have drawn their tears.

Few people are able to judge of the good understanding that is necessary to the player, in order to his keeping up the sense and spirit of a sentiment; to prevent his exaggerating it to bombast, or weakening and debasing it to nothing in the delivery; and to his distinguishing the different steps thro' which his author means to lead the passions and the imaginations of his audience; and by which he is to carry himself from opposite to opposite affections.

There is an art of colouring peculiar to poetry, which, tho' in many respects it be different from that in painting, is yet to be conducted by the same kind of rules. We require of both the same strength of tints, and the same distinctions in the distribution of the brightneses and shadows; the same caution in observing the degradation of lights; and the same art in throwing objects to a distance, or in bringing them immediately under the eye.

It is not only the poet, but the player also, of whom we require this skill in colouring the objects he is to present to us; he, like the painter, must be a master of this ingenious theory of shadows, the skilful application of which is by an insensible gradation to conduct the eye from the first and most striking part of the picture to whatever lies obscured in shades behind. As the painter often gives us a prospect of an extensive country in a very little piece, the poet sometimes in the compass of a few lines, gives his actor a multitude of different impressions: in this case the one as well as the other is to exert his skill in  
disting-



distinguishing to us, that things tho' placed near to one another in the small bounds of the representation, are not neighbours to each other in the one case in the heart, or in the other in the prospect which is the subject of the picture. The player ought to have as strict an attention to these differences, and as nice a judgment in them, as the poet; he must no more than the painter, confound those things together between which nature has plac'd a vast distance, because they are to be seen in a small compass: But then he must very nicely conduct himself in those sudden transitions, thro' which he is to make one passion succeed to another; and that perhaps its contrary.

The player has equal necessity for address and for precision, to give the true strength to every passage in his part, and to convey the sentiments delivered to his care, in their proper force and beauty. Nor are these qualifications less useful to him in dictating the necessary gestures which are to accompany the expression; and in the forming not only his countenance, but his whole person, according to the nature of the age, station, and character of the person he represents; and even in the proportioning the tone of his voice and the attitudes of his figure, to the situation in which he is plac'd.

It is evident then that a good understanding is as necessary to a player, as a pilot is to a vessel at sea: 'Tis the understanding alone that governs the helm, that directs the whole fabrick, and calculates and marks out its course. There are some instances indeed in which an author has given such force and perspicuity to a sentiment, that the understanding of the person who delivers

it in his words, is not interested in the reception it meets with from the audience ; but these are only particular cases.

The reader who has seen *Milton's* masque of *Comus* represented some months ago at *Drury Lane*, will not be at a loss for an instance of this truth. The frugal manager of that theatre, who seems to understand it as the great secret of his office to treat an audience as cheap as he can, and to give them no more good things at once than are just sufficient to bring them together ; had, at this time, converted a gaudy scene which had been almost the only merit in a former entertainment, into a palace for *Comus*. He seemed to have considered it as an unnecessary piece of luxury (to use the words of a very celebrated writer, who chuses to be nameless on these occasions) to treat more than one of the senses of his audience at a time ; and as the sight was here to be charm'd, there appear'd no sort of necessity for addressing any thing to the understanding.

On this occasion we had an opportunity of seeing the truth of the proposition just delivered in a very eminent manner ; and found that *Milton* was able to do more, much more, than all that *Addison* or his warmest friends and commentators have said of him ; even to make the man who play'd the part of the eldest brother, deliver words that shou'd command applause.

We flatter ourselves that every body will allow in this case the understanding of the person who pronounc'd *Milton's* words, was not at all concern'd in procuring them a good reception ; yet we remember the whole house rung with the joy of the audience on hearing the noble

ble sentiments thrown into that part where the author declares,

Virtue cou'd see to do what Virtue ought  
By her own radiant light: 'Tho' sun and moon  
Were in the flat seas sunk.——

He that has light within his own clear breast,  
May sit i'th' center and enjoy bright day;  
But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts  
Benighted walks under the mid-day sun,  
Himself is his own dungeon.

Not the violent emphasis this most judicious speaker contriv'd to throw upon the word *Flat* in the third line, or on *Under* in the last but one; not even his sinking the word *Virtue* in both places where it occurs, cou'd prevent the audience from perceiving that there was more merit in these lines, than in half the tragedies that have been applauded within these seven years.

Nay we had occasion to observe, that not only an elevated sentiment, but the mere spirit of poetry, when rais'd to the pitch it stands at in this piece, cou'd support itself in the same manner independantly of the machine it was utter'd from; when we heard from the same unmeaning mouth, and almost in the same breath,

Wisdom's self  
Oft seeks a sweet retired solitude,  
Where with her best nurse contemplation,  
She plumes her feathers and lets grow her wings,  
That in the various bustle of resort  
Were all too ruffled and sometimes impair'd.

And afterwards,

No evil thing that walks by night  
In fog, or fire ; by lake or moorish fen ;  
Blue meagre hag, or stubborn unlaïd ghost ;  
That breaks his magick chains at Curfew time,  
Hath hurtful power o'er true virginity.

It must be allow'd that a long familiarity with the stage will sometimes supply the place of judgment and good sense in the performer : Sometimes also he may have been oblig'd to nature for peculiar qualifications, and that in so eminent a degree, that often when they are brought into use, tho' it be merely done by a kind of instinct, not by a judicious adapting of them to the scenes, they shall happen to suit so well with the circumstances of the character he represents, that we cannot deny him a high applause. This however is no more than the deception of a moment ; an absurdity that follows immediately after in the voice, the gesture, or the expression of the countenance of this lucky player, lets us into his true character ; and we find that it was not the man, but merely his organisation that before merited our applause.

How truly pityable is the condition of that author, who is under a necessity of entrusting his success, his reputation, in a new piece, to these miserable automats : And on the other side, how happy is the fortune of that writer, who sees his play fall into such hands, that every character of it, not only among the capital but the inferior ones too, is given to a performer who will not only be capable of preserving all the spi-  
rit



rit of the most shining parts of it to its utmost height, but of adding graces to those which are less eminent or striking.

The comic writers are above all others happy in falling into such hands, as their pieces are often in a great measure supported by the delicate and judicious address of the performer: How ought the poet in this way to congratulate himself when he finds his principal character in the hands of a player, who knows the nicest rules of joining the delicate to the natural; who knows how to add a graceful and decent dignity to the comic scene; and has even raised more than once the laugh of the pretty gentlemen of the age at their own follies!

The actor who is capable of executing this, surely can never be suspected of wanting understanding: 'Tis evident that this is beyond the reach of all the qualifications in the world without that director; indeed few of the comic actors, who have made any figure, have been suspected in this particular. It is not the same case among the performers in tragedy; every one will recollect that some who have appeared at least decent in many not contemptible characters in that way, have been violently suspected of a deficiency in this point.

If we would be at the trouble to establish a more just idea of *Sense* or *Understanding*, than at present the world perhaps usually does; and give ourselves leave to judge of the several kinds of it, or the several forms at least under which it presents itself to our view; we should be more accurate in the determining the characters of our theatrical performers in regard to it. Those among them whom we hear accused of wanting

sense, perhaps ought rather to be said to have a different kind of it from that of their accusers, than absolutely to be without it. Players who please in various characters, and yet are censured as having very bad understandings, have often indeed but little of that sort of sense, which tho' in certain companies it gives a man the greatest reputation, yet evidently deserves the least; of that sort of sense which is destin'd for ostentation rather than for use, and which may be aptly enough compar'd to those kinds of trees, which yield a profusion of flowers, but bear no fruit: This is a kind of sense which furnishes us with a bare parade and shew, but is of no use in any of the occasions of life. It makes us shine in matters of no importance, but every professor of it has found, at one time or other, that it is not of the least assistance to us in any thing in which it is worth our while to wish we may succeed.

Perhaps this kind of sense is wanting in those actors, who tho' they are applauded on the stage, are said among the criticks to have bad understandings; but if it is so, nature has given them in recompense another species of it, which exerts itself indeed with less pomp and shew, but which is infinitely more determinate and more useful. They have at least understandings good enough, to be able to enter into the nicest and most abstruse points in their profession: And it is plain they have us'd this penetration to the best advantage, as they have by means of it found the way to a lasting applause: and if we allow them this, as less cannot be allowed, we are no longer to censure them as being wanting in point of understanding.

Tho'

Tho' this be an incontestible truth, experience shews us that the tragick actors are continually exposed to this sort of censure; while scarce any man has ventur'd to cast the same reproach at those players who excel in comedy. The reason seems not founded on any thing in nature; but on what ought to shame our criticks out of it, on a fault in their own apprehensions. Is it not wholly owing to this, that the finessè and delicacy of the comic actor is more open, more exposed to the audience, than that of the performer in tragedy either is, or indeed ought to be? The sense and spirit of the actor, as well as of the author, in tragedy, is ordinarily to disclose itself only in the dignity and justness of the sentiment and expression; and they are not so easily distinguished under this disguise, as where in comic scenes they shew their naked face, without the slightest veil, on every occasion. Nay, in many cases, the man who is very well able to distinguish those graces, under the shade that a decent propriety throws over them, does not think it essential to his entertainment to do so. When we go to a tragedy, we expect the heart to be affected rather than the imagination, and the actor naturally loses half the praise of that very merit by which we are affected. But 'tis not so in a comedy; we go to that to laugh, we give ourselves up to every emotion the comedian excites in us, and never concern ourselves about the means by which he produces them. The great difference, in fine, turns upon this; at a comedy the heart is less engaged than at a tragedy, and the audience is consequently more at leisure to distinguish which are the effects produc'd by the art and management of the author,

ductility in the wax is not more requisite to fit it for the purpose of the modeller, than is this *sensibility* in the heart of the actor, by means of which it is to receive whatever modifications the writer pleases, and that in an easy, an unconstrain'd succession. Whoever, on a candid examination of himself, finds that he cannot easily submit his mind to all these changes, let him not think of offering himself to the public as a player. The performer, who does not himself feel the several emotions he is to express to the audience, will give but a lifeless and insipid representation of them. All the art in the world can never supply the want of *Sensibility* in the player ; if he is defective in this essential quality, all the advantages of nature, all the accomplishments he may have acquired by study, are thrown away upon him ; he will never make others feel what he does not feel himself, and will always be as different from the thing he is to represent, as a mask from a face.

The being able to subject the soul to succeeding passions, tho' they be contrary ones, as is frequently the case, is universally allowed to be necessary, in the highest degree, to the tragedian : the common opinion seems to judge it less essential to the comic performer ; but, in reality, it is not only equally necessary to the last, but even more so.

The dignity of tragedy does not permit it to represent to us any other than great and striking incidents. The actions of the persons it represents are all to be of this kind ; and it is therefore reduced to a necessity of constantly having recourse to those passions which are the most proper to produce them.

The



The three great resources of these actions are *love, hatred, and ambition*; and it is in consequence of tragedy's being ty'd down to these narrow bounds, that the principal characters it gives us are tender and passionate lovers, who generally water with their tears the paths by which they are to arrive at the period of their misfortunes; generous avengers of injuries, whose souls are bent to appease the manes of their murder'd fathers, relations, or friends, or to give liberty to their native land, by the death of some murderer or usurper; or glorious criminals, who tread under foot the most sacred ties to raise themselves to a throne, from which they are afterwards to be thrown down in their turn. Sometimes, indeed, the tragic poet has made a maternal, or a conjugal affection, the subject of his most interesting scenes: The first of these never fails to engage the attention and the hearts of an audience in an uncommon manner; but the same success has not always attended the other.

The affection of an *Andromache* for her son, has never fail'd to draw tears from even the less tender part of an audience. Who ever heard, without this silent, this most sincere applause, Mrs. *Cibber* deliver the maternal affection of the widow of *Hector*, in the natural, the expressive words of

—————my swell'n heart is full————  
 I have a thousand farewells for my son,  
 But tears break in—grief interrupts my speech;  
 My soul o'erflows in fondness—let him know,  
 I dy'd to save him, and wou'd die again.  
 Season his mind with early hints of glory;  
 Make

and which are owing to the address and merit of the performer.

## C H A P. II.

### Of S E N S I B I L I T Y.

*Whether this Quality of the Heart be more important to the Performers in Tragedy, or in Comedy ?*

WE almost want a word in the *English* language to express a very essential qualification in an actor, and one which more than any other enables him to affect and please us. The *French*, who esteem it one of the greatest requisites to every player, of whatever kind, call it *Sentiment*, a term that carries much the same meaning with the word *Sensibility*, by which we have chosen to express it ; and by which we would be understood to mean, a disposition to be affected by the passions, which are the subjects of dramatic writing.

It is evident that different people have this quality of the heart in a very different degree : if we look round among the audience at a Tragedy, we shall find people variously affected by the same words, delivered by the same voice, and under the same circumstances ; and in the reading, the same scene in a play shall pass off smoothly from the tongue of one person, while the disturbance of the heart of another, as he goes thro' it, shall render the organs of his voice incapable of pronouncing the words articulately. The degree

degree of understanding is not concern'd in this difference of the effect from the same words ; the person who feels least from them often understanding their true meaning, and entering into their beauties perhaps better than the other. 'Tis *Sensibility*, a peculiar quality in the mind, that determines the force of the scene ; and 'tis evident that this is a quality of more consequence in playing than in any other profession. In what road of playing it is most important, remains to be enquired into.

People who find themselves naturally of a tender disposition, are apt to believe that they are therefore form'd for playing well in tragedy ; and, on the contrary, those who are of a lively, jocund, and sprightly turn, commonly flatter themselves that they shall therefore be able to shine in comedy. It must be allowed, that a turn to seriousness, tenderness, and melancholy in the tragedian, and a natural gaiety of temper in the comedian, are two as considerable advantages as we could wish in them. They are not, however, of that consequence the possessors of them are apt to imagine ; nay, they are so far from alone furnishing out the player, that, at the very best, they make only a part of that qualification which we have here called *sensibility*. The sense of this term is very extensive ; it takes in not only the natural turn of mind in the player, but that plianthness of disposition by means of which the different passions are made easily to succeed to one another in his soul. The heart that enjoys this, in a proper degree, is like soft wax, which, under the hands of a judicious artist, is capable of becoming, in the same minute, a Medea and a Sappho ; an easy ductility

Make him acquainted with his ancestors.  
 Trace out their shining story to his thoughts :  
 Dwell on th' exploits of his immortal father,  
 And sometimes let him hear his mother's name.

Let him reflect upon his royal birth  
 With modest pride : *Pyrrhus* will prove a friend ;  
 But let him know he has a conqueror's right.  
 He must be taught to stifle his resentments,  
 And sacrifice his vengeance to his safety.  
 Should he prove headstrong, rash, or unadvis'd,  
 He then will frustrate all his mother's virtue,  
 Provoke his fate, and I shall die in vain.

Or those often celebrated, but never too often  
 repeated ones, which close the first act.

I'll go, and in the anguish of my heart,  
 Weep o'er my child : if he must die, my life  
 Is wrap'd in his : I shall not long survive.  
 'Tis for his sake that I have suffer'd life,  
 Groan'd in captivity, and out-liv'd *Hector*.

Yes, my *Astyanax*, we'll go together ;  
 Together to the realms of night we'll go.  
 There to thy ravish'd eyes thy fire I'll shew,  
 And point him out among the shades below. }

It may not be amiss to observe, in regard to these last lines, a thing which will however be treated of more at large hereafter ; *viz.* that it is often necessary for the actor to sacrifice the measure of the verse to the sense. The three first lines of this last quotation, perhaps, never were spoke without commanding the tears of the audience, except by Mrs. Roberts ; but she, tho' in the whole, far from a despicable player, always destroyed the force of them by keeping so rigidly



rigidly to the measure as to make some sort of pause at the end of each line, tho' the sense evidently runs into the succeeding ones.

After recollecting the constant effect of this maternal affection on the audience, let us compare with it that of the conjugal love, express'd in no inferior manner, and in a no less favourite play, in the character of *Belvidera*, in the *Venice Preserv'd* of *Otway*. Perhaps this honest and noble passion has never been touch'd in a more masterly manner than in that speech of this lady; where, after her husband's representing to her the miserable condition they should shortly be reduc'd to, she answers,

O, I will love thee, even in madness love thee;  
Tho' my distracted senses shou'd forsake me,  
I'd find some intervals, when my poor heart  
Shou'd 'swage itself, and be let loose to thine:

Tho' the bare earth be all our resting-place,  
Its roots our food, some cliff our habitation;  
I'll make this arm a pillow for thine head,  
And as thou sighing ly'st, and swell'd with sorrow,  
Creep to thy bosom, pour the balm of love  
Into thy soul, and kiss thee to thy rest;  
Then praise our God, and watch thee till the  
morning.

We have a fair comparison in these almost inimitable passages, both spoken by the same inimitable actress, between the effects of one of these passions and the other; and the case is soon decided, when we perceive, that tho' a whole audience feels the first, no tears are ever shed for the last, except by a few ladies who have not been long married. If we would ask the reason  
for

for this partiality in regard to the poet and the performer, tho' both equally great in each case, perhaps it is that the former is more in nature, and that there are more affectionate mothers than affectionate wives among us.

Tragedy not only takes in but few passions, but all that it does employ, bear a sort of natural conformity to one another ; they are all violent, and all serious ones ; its heroes are always either in the most vehement transports, or in the deepest melancholy. Some of them are, thro' the whole play, furious, raging, and thirsting as it were for blood ; others are continually bent down beneath the weight of their own misfortunes, or of those of some other person who is dear to them : both are continually agitated by rage, or by affliction ; by an impatience to see their intents accomplish'd ; or by a despair on seeing the execution of them retarded by some powerful obstacles. If the poet suspends for a few moments the rage, or the misery of his principal characters, to relieve for a time the audience and the player, it is generally done with design to engage them immediately afterwards in scenes yet more affecting than those out of which he has for the present reliev'd them. A few only of the passions, for these reasons, fall to the share of the tragedian ; the comic player, on the other hand, has the whole series of them within his province ; and he will be esteem'd a man of no consequence in his profession, if he cannot, with equal strength and propriety, express the transports of a fond and foolish joy, and those of the most excruciating uneasiness ; the ridiculous doating of an old and impotent lover, and the suspicious resentments of a jealous husband, or insulted rival ; the noble  
boldness

boldness of a daring, generous mind ; and the contemptible timidity of a pusillanimous heart ; if he cannot represent to us with the same strength and spirit, a stupid admiration, and an insolent disdain ; all the extravagances of the most interested self-love, when flatter'd with circumstances that favour it, or hurt by contrary accidents : In fine, if he be not able to give a due force to every emotion of the heart ; to every species of passion that human nature is capable of being affected by.

It is not sufficient for him that he be able to put on the image of every one of the passions that fall within the reach of his author, if he have not, beside this, the power of throwing himself readily and easily out of one into another of them. The business of comedy is to raise and to keep up a pleasurable sensation, to give joy to an audience ; and the poets who excel in this species of writing, well knowing that a dull uniformity in the scene is one of the greatest enemies to this, have ever been attentive to the necessary variety ; and taken care to make every capital character in the same piece, and not unfrequently in the same scene, the sport of a number of different passions ; they have always given it an infinity of contrary impressions, the one of which suddenly drives away another, to be, in its turn, as suddenly banished by a third.

Mr. *Garrick*, who is as amiable in the character of a player, as censurable in another capacity in which he has too much connexion with our theatrical entertainments, gives us an excellent instance of what perfection an actor may arrive at in this way, in his *Archer* : in this, tho' not one  
of

of the characters in which he makes the greatest figure, how readily does he run through the several artful transitions which the author of the *Stratagem* has thrown into his character, from one passion to another, most foreign, nay, sometimes, most opposite ones ! and how wholly does he devote himself to each in its turn, as if no other, of whatever kind, had ever claimed any power over him !

In one scene he is the ardent lover, in another the mercenary schemer : in one, the jovial footman treating his fellow slave with all the ready familiarity of an equal, in another, the gallant courting in high heroics : in one scene, nay in one moment, the free companion, and the humble attendant of *Aimwell*, or the resolute heroine in the engagement with a ruffian, and the bantering acquaintance with the lady.

Till this excellent performer play'd this part, we never knew what beauties it was capable of, in the sudden transitions from passion to passion, in the last act ; where he alternately rejoices in the success of the scheme he was upon ; and becomes the furly accuser of the friend who had partnership in it, and whom an instant before he was hugging in his arms ; then conceives new hopes from promising circumstances, which fail his expectation, and return him to his despair. In fine, his exquisite mixture of passions, at the same instant in the dread of a discovery from an old acquaintance, his transport in immediately afterwards finding this very person the messenger of better news than could have been expected ; his passion for Mrs. *Sullen* and his dear *Cherry* at the same time ; his concern at the supposed loss of that good-natur'd creature, and the joy at receiving



ceiving news both of her and his money at once ; all this, notwithstanding all that has been said of Mr. *Wilks*, never was so express'd as to interest the audience in every one of the several passions together ; or but to convey all of them to them, till we saw Mr. *Garrick* in the character.

We have a multitude of instances of this kind in our other comedies, where the actor always fails, and the author is censured by most people as dull in the most spirited parts of his piece. The French stage gives us infinitely greater instances of this transition from passion to passion in comedy than ours ; and to do justice to the performers of that nation, it affords us also very numerous instances of actors who are able to play them.

The character of *Arnolphe*, in the *Ecole des Femmes*, is an eminent instance of this, and may serve as a lesson to the player, of whatever nation, to instruct him in every thing that is necessary in this way. This character, in the course of a very few moments, is carried through all the contrasts which could produce in him the utmost curiosity to know every thing that related to the success of his amour, and the dread of his finding that he was betray'd : he laments that he is so far distant from the object of his affection, and that at so very improper a time ; and at the same moment rejoices that he is certain of not being quite so miserable as he had the moment before persuaded himself that he was. When *Agnes* ingenuously acknowledges to him, that she cannot love him, to what a variety of different emotions does the jealous lover give himself up, despairing to gain her either by threats or persuasions ; and what a variety of opposite passions does he express  
on



on that occasion ! What an opposition is seen in him of aversion and tenderness ; of rage and softness ; of tyrannic fierceness, and of slavish humility ; what terrible projects of revenge, and what gallant resolutions of forgetting every thing.

Whoever has seen the performer who now plays *Arnolphe* at *Paris*, will not blame us for going so far for an instance of a perfection in this article, which we cannot flatter ourselves (notwithstanding all the merit we have been so just to in Mr. *Garrick*) so far as to pretend is found at home.

If in playing comedy it is necessary that the player be able to make the most different impressions succeed one another readily and easily in his heart, it is not less essential to the performer in tragedy that he feel, much more strongly than the other needs to do, every one of those which he is to express to the audience. *Sensibility* in the comic actor, therefore, must be a more universal agent, and in the tragedian it must be a more powerful one : it must be capable of exerting itself in a stronger manner within its due bounds, and of producing greater effects. The comedian needs only to have a soul equal to that of the generality of men ; but the player, who thinks to excel in tragedy, must have one above the common rank.

'Tis from our being in some degree sensible of this, that we are less ready to pardon the comedian, if he does not express, under every circumstance, the just and requisite degree, as well as the just species of passion that he is to describe to us. We are not in a condition to judge, with exactness, of the performance of the tragedian ; we want the necessary realities to make the comparison, by which we should be able to determine  
whether

whether he comes up to his duty in the part ; but we are never under this uncertainty in judging of the comedians ; we never want the objects of comparison for them ; but at any time, if we will only examine what would pass within our own hearts, supposing we were in the same situation in which the author has placed the character they are representing, we shall be able to decide whether they are accurate and faithful copies.

It will perhaps be reply'd to us, "This last proposition cannot indeed be disputed ; but is that which establishes a necessity of this *sensibility* to all the performers on the stage, equally incontestable ? You have established it as a first principle, that no player can express a passion perfectly on the stage, if he do not feel it deeply himself. But how will you be able to persuade the world that some of our actresses, who shall be nameless, who are so perfect in the art of feigning in private passions, which they in reality feel nothing of, may not carry the same artifice to the stage, and dissemble as well with us there ? Or how shall we be convinc'd, that women who are so able to feign things to their lovers, are incapable of counterfeiting with the spectators, or of describing, expressively enough to them, passions which themselves have never felt ?"

The objection is plausible ; but it is easily answer'd. We are not to be surpris'd if women succeed better in deceiving eyes determin'd to be favourable to them, than they can in disguising their hearts to persons who are free from this prejudice, and whose whole attention, in regard to them, is employ'd in examining their actions in a critical and unbiass'd manner, and

that with a considerable share of curiosity and inspection. The self-love of the gallant is always a very faithful friend to the mistress; but that of the spectator has no such influence in regard to the actress: the vanity of the first leads him to imagine, that he sees the lady what she is not; and the discernment of the other teaches him to suspect that he does not see her what she ought to be: the one finds a pleasure in suffering himself to be cheated, the other tastes a greater, in shewing that he is not a dupe to the representation, when the artifice is too gross to deceive: he is very willing, in cases of this kind, to be impos'd on; but he would have his error carry with it, at least, a face of probability.

The mistress and the actress have only this in common, that it is the more easy to them to affect a passion, as they are less under the influence of its opposite one. From this principle it follows, that the actress cannot be too careful to prevent the common accidents of life, whether good or bad ones, from making any great impressions on her heart. If she suffers herself to be affected too violently with pleasure or concern, on account of her more trivial, domestick affairs, she will scarce ever be in a condition to let the passions of the character she is to represent take place sufficiently in her heart, or affect her deeply enough to make it possible for her to affect the audience. She will find it a difficulty too great to struggle against, to displace, just at her pleasure, the passions that have personally affected her, to appropriate, with any degree of success, those peculiar to the character she is to assume.

The last season gave us a very strong instance of this truth in a new actress, Miss B—y.

The

The first night this actress appear'd, we saw in her a good figure, a deportment that promis'd, after some time and practice, to be not despicable, and a perfect attention to every incident of her part. It was with considerable pleasure that we expected to see her improve upon us the next night; but we were disappointed: every look was wild and staring; and, excepting the awkward stiffness that had been the principal blemish which disgusted us the night before, nothing remain'd the same about her. She seem'd to forget every particular she ought to have remember'd, except the words; and those she repeated, in many places, in so heedless a manner, that it was evident she was thinking of something else all the while. In short, her success had, in one sense, been much greater the first night than she had expected. If she had, as an actress, found fewer admirers than her vanity had flatter'd her into a belief she should, she had made more lovers than she well knew what to do with; and, from that time, the hurry of her passions, independent of the theatre, render'd it impossible for her to attend to those which belonged to it; and she, consequently, became the most flat, insipid, stalling, staring thing that ever appeared there; 'till to our great good fortune, as well as hers, we lost her.

People of a discerning judgment have found it easy to discover the same occasional interruptions in Mrs. *Woffington's* playing; and when her mind has been unsettled, have very evidently discern'd a want of attention to the business of the scene: perhaps it is more owing than we imagine to an uncommonly settled and tranquil state at home, that this lady has for the last year or two succeeded so well in every thing. It is notorious



of the late Mrs. *Oldfield*, that nothing ruffled her temper ; it was for this reason that it was always ready to throw itself into every passion the author pleas'd ; and it is not less certain, that the greatest actress of the present age owes no small share of her success to a natural philosophic turn of mind, which nothing is able to discompose.

### C H A P. III.

*Whether an Actor can have too much Fire ?*

THERE are some modern performers, who, in scenes where it is required they should be violently affected, are under a necessity of putting off an artificial warmth upon us, in the place of that native fire and spirit, that Promethean heat which they find nature has left them deficient in ; and we are unhappy enough to have another set of them, the weakness of whose constitutions, the natural imbecility of whose organs will not permit them even to use this resource. We have had many modern instances among these last sort of people, who finding they were not able to cheat our senses, have modestly attempted to impose upon our understandings : they very seriously, and, as they would have it be thought, very wisely tell us, that the fire which the mob is so charm'd with, in some of their cotemporaries, is much more frequently a fault in players than a perfection.

The first set are a sort of coiners of false money, who would pass copper upon us for gold ; the others a set of fools, who attempt to persuade us, that the spangles of hoar-frosts covering



vering the leafless branches of our trees, are the greatest beauties of nature; because it is their fortune to inhabit a country which is buried in snow the greatest part of the year.

A Player of *Drury-Lane*, who is not without his merit when properly employ'd; who has good sense, a sound judgment, and many other of the requisites for the stage; but who remarkably wants this native fire about him, gives us a very eminent instance of the first kind, in the character of *Priuli*.

The poet, who has introduced this character in the midst of a high resentment, kindled upon a natural enough, tho' unjust cause, doubtless intended to shew him to us in all the transports of rage and indignation for the loss of a daughter whom he dearly loved, and who had been stolen from him by a man whom he hated. Let us imagine Mr. *Garrick* under these circumstances: let us recollect the provok'd old man in *King Lear*; and when we remember from that, what ought to be the spirited indignation of *Priuli* against *Jaffeir*, we shall see a very strong instance of the impropriety of forcing into this character a man who must be violent in spite of nature; and who, when he has conjur'd up all the powers of his soul, can give us only noisy, empty sound, instead of that heart-felt anguish, heightened into rage by the presence of the offending person, with which the exasperated old man thus utters his curses.

May all your joys in her prove false like mine.  
A sterile fortune, and a barren bed  
Attend you both: continual discord make  
Your days and nights bitter and grievous still:

May the hard hand of a vexatious need  
Oppress and grind you ; 'till at last you find  
The curse of disobedience all your portion.

And afterwards, when the child of his once lov'd  
daughter is mention'd with an intent to sooth  
him, adds :

Let it live  
To bait thee for its bread, and din thine ears  
With hungry cries, while its unhappy mother  
Sits down and weeps in bitterness and want.

It is easy to see that the performer we are mentioning is, in this particular part, what has been much too severely said of him in all, a player in spite of nature. There are many characters in which warmth and violence have no share ; in these an actor, of this naturally sedate turn, is cut out to excel : but the forcing him into a part where things are requir'd which are not in him, is unfair, nay 'tis unjust both to himself and those who do it. If we would recollect, by way of contrast to the labour'd violence, the artificial heat with which these passages are deliver'd by this actor, the true spirit, the native fire with which a provok'd old man ought to deliver himself, let us look to the player we have just mention'd, Mr. *Garrick*, in *King Lear*, at the conclusion of the second act, where, urg'd by the ingratitude and baseness of those whom he had rais'd to power, he cries out,

Heavens, drop your patience down !  
Ye see me here, ye gods, a poor old man,  
As full of grief as age : wretched in both——

I'll

I'll hear no more ; no—ye unnatural hags,  
 I will have such revenges on you both,  
 That all the world shall—I will do such things ;  
 What they are yet I know not ; but they shall be  
 The terrors of the earth— You think I'll weep ;  
 This heart shall break into a thousand pieces  
 Before I'll weep.—O, gods, I shall be mad !—

Perhaps nobody but *Shakespeare* could have well drawn a character in so strong a scene of rage and vehemence : certainly no man, except the gentleman we have just mentioned in the character, ever did, or ever could do him justice in the expressing it. The whole compass of the stage will not afford us so high a contrast of the true and the false fire, the native and the artificial violence we have been speaking of, as we see in these ; therefore more specimens of this defect are needless.

If we would proceed to enquire after instances of the other ; where the native inactivity of an actor's soul would cheat us into a belief that it has merit in it ; and by a formal, dull, and cold recital, made in sounding solemn accents, persuade us, that the dignity of tragedy is best kept up by this sleepy virtue ; let us recollect the man who, about a twelvemonth since, play'd a part in which we have been us'd to see a performer, more eminent for force than for vivacity, shine to great advantage ; we mean *Horatio* in the *Fair Penitent*. When we have called to mind the true spirit, the noble, the disdainful anger with which Mr. *Quin* addresses *Lothario* in their quarrel, let us remember the philosophic spirit, and cool blood with which this gentleman spoke

'Tis well you are—the man who wrongs my friend,

To the earth's utmost verge wou'd I pursue ;  
No place, tho' ere so holy, shou'd protect him ;  
No shape that artful fear ere found should hide him,  
Till he fair answer made, and did me justice.

We shall then be perfectly convinc'd of the absurdity of the doctrine these people have set on foot to screen their own imperfections, and be able to judge how much truth there is in the assertion, that *spirit and fire are always blameable in grave characters.*

This is a tenet strongly maintain'd indeed by this insipid set of players ; but they are to know, that no character has any business in tragedy that is so very philosophic as to be out of the reach of all passions ; that the whole series of our dramatic writings does not furnish us with one instance of a good play in which there is such a part ; and we may add, that the player, if he has any of the native fire in him which is so essential to his profession, can never shew it to so much advantage as when the character he performs is naturally sedate ; but is forc'd, by injuries too great to bear, to rise into all the violence of rage.

If it be necessary to strengthen the evidence we have given, of the absurdity of this tame playing in characters where the passions dictate otherwise, let us call to mind the sweet, unpassion'd gentleman who shewed himself first to us, two or three years ago, in the character of *Hotspur*. This player was one of the phlegmatic rank, and had convinc'd himself, by what he had heard from that great enemy to unnecessary vehemence, *Macklin*, that the highest merit of playing was  
openly



openly in his way, if he only pursued his natural coolness. It was not easy for a person, so nearly concern'd as this gentleman, to distinguish between a judicious and an unnatural suppression of the signs of rage in the lessons that excellent instructor deliver'd in his lectures; and in consequence of his firm persuasion that every thing was right that was not violent, he told his audience, with all the temper of a philosopher,

By heaven, methinks it were an easy leap  
To pluck bright honour from the pale-fac'd moon,  
Or drag up drowned honour by the locks.

Let us not be dupes to the artifices of the first of these sort of players, nor to the sophisms of the latter: let us not always take the exclamations, or the contorsions of an actor of the first kind for fire, nor the ice of the latter for prudence. Far from imitating some of the modern frequenters of the theatre, who are continually preaching it up to the young actors, whose success they interest themselves in, that they are of all things to moderate their fire; let us pronounce it as a general rule to every person who attempts to shine upon the stage, that he cannot have too much of this enlivening spirit; that multitudes of players have the ill luck to displease their audiences, only because nature has deny'd them this great, this interesting requisite; or, which comes to much the same end, because their timidity, or sheepish bashfulness has prevented them from making use of what they have of it; and that, on the other hand, many of our actors, who at present meet with a frequent applause, would establish themselves a reputation much more general, and less



lable to be contested, if they were more animated with this invigorating flame, which, as it were, gives life to the representations of the stage.

We remember when Mrs. *Elmy*, an actress of great judgment, endowed with a sweet voice and a pleasing deportment, obtain'd a merited applause in the Character of *Lavinia* in the *Fair Penitent*; so great, that it startled the *Calista* in the same play; and had *Calista* been any body but Mrs. *Cibber*, would unquestionably have made *Lavinia* the first character in the performance for that night.

The sweetness of disposition, tenderness, affection, and fidelity of that part suited extremely well with the peculiar turn of this actress; they gave her room to shew all her perfections, and gave us no opportunity to see her defects; we were charin'd with her; nay, many were in doubt whether they should declare her the second, or the first actress of the present stage. Full of the success of this, she appeared again in her other characters afterwards; but we then not only found her of somewhat less merit than we had before esteemed her, but we discovered too the defect which kept down all her other perfections. We name this to the lady not by way of censure or reproach, but to tell her, in honest friendship, the only thing she wants, in order to her being as great in every character, as she was in that of *Lavinia*. The one thing wanting in her is, that Promethean heat, that fire we have been just now speaking the praises of. How far she can attain this, by practice, she herself will best judge, when she examines her own heart, and finds whether nature has left her deficient in it, or whether it is only a false modesty that prevents her using it.

How

How fine a figure did this judicious speaker make in some parts of the character of *the Lady in Comus*; but how cold, how (not to spare the word) contemptible did her want of fire make her appear, when, with little more heat than we have just mentioned in the memorable *Hotspur*, she said to the god who was courting her by arguments against virtue and chastity,

——to him who dares

Arm his profane tongue with contemptuous words  
Against the sun-clad power of chastity,  
Fain wou'd I something say :—yet to what purpose.

Thou hast not ear nor soul to apprehend;  
And thou art worthy that thou shou'dst not know  
More happiness than this thy present lot;  
Thou art not fit to hear thyself convinc'd.  
Yet should I try, the uncontroled worth  
Of this pure cause wou'd kindle my rapt spirits  
To such a flame of sacred vehemence,  
That dumb things wou'd be mov'd to sympathize,  
And the brute earth wou'd lend her nerves, and  
shake

Till all thy magic structures, rear'd so high,  
Were shatter'd into heaps o'er thy false head.

It is easy to conceive what transport and vehemence the poet intended should accompany these words, by the uncommon strength he has given them; and we may imagine how strongly he intended an audience should be affected by them, when he introduces the immortal being to whom they were address'd; to use his own words, trembling with terror as he hears them.

As when the wrath of Jove  
Speaks thunder, and the chains of Erebus,  
To some of Satan's crew.

'Tis impossible for words of so much force to be heard without being admired ; but we appeal to the audience, whether that admiration was not all that was felt when this lady spoke them ! We lost the terror that should have accompanied so bold, so nobly daring a speech ; and, in fine, we admired the poet, while we forgot the actress.

The propositions we have deliver'd in this chapter will never be call'd in question by any one who knows how to avoid the common error of confounding the vehemence of declamation with true and genuine spirit, or who will properly reflect on the nature of that quality, and by this means find, that this fire, which we are celebrating in the player, is nothing more than a just rapidity of thought, and vivacity of disposition, in concurrence with which only it is, that all the other qualities that constitute him a good one, are happy in giving the marks of reality to his performance.

When this principle is establish'd, it is easy to conclude from it, that an actor can never have too much fire ; since it is impossible that the representation of his character can ever have too much the air of a reality : and, consequently, that the impression on his mind can never be too ready or too lively ; nor can the expression of it answer too suddenly, or too faithfully to the impulse he receives from it.

A performer will, indeed, be very severely censur'd, and very justly too, if his playing be not in all respects

respects consonant with, and perfectly agreeable to the character and circumstances of the person he represents ; or if, under the intent of manifesting his fire, he only exhibits a set of convulsive gestures, or roars out a parcel of inadequate exclamations. But, in this case, the people of taste and judgment will not accuse him of having too much fire, but too little understanding ; they will even complain, under these very circumstances, of his wanting fire ; and he will find himself under the same sort of censure with certain modern books, which the vulgar accuse of having too much wit in them, but which these sort of judges condemn for having no wit at all !

There is not, perhaps, a scene on the modern stage in which an actor is required to feel more, or to express himself with greater force and real fire, than that of *Cassio*, in *Othello*, after the mischiefs of his drunken fit. An honest, brave, good-natur'd man is, in this play, seduced by a villain to drink, with intent to breed a quarrel ; he gets drunk, he quarrels, he behaves very ill, and his superior officer coming in, he is broke for it upon the spot. Rage here takes the place of drunkenness, and too much fire cannot shew itself in his expression of that rage ; but we find that a false fire may easily be thrown into it. What can be more natural, more beautiful, than the expressions the inimitable author of this play throws into his mouth upon this occasion.

Reputation ! reputation !—I have lost my reputation—I have lost the immortal part of myself, and all that remains is bestial—my reputation !—O thou invincible spirit of wine, if thou hast no name to be known by, let us call thee



Devil——O that men shou'd put an enemy into their mouths to steal away their brains——To be now a sensible man, by and by a fool, and presently a beast——Every inordinate cup is unblest'd and the ingredient is a devil.

What infinite room is there in these broken sentences, for an actor who has the true fire of his profession in him, to get himself applause! Yet so it has happen'd that in our time, nothing has been made of it: We have had no tolerable Cassio in my remembrance; and these inimitable passages have either been pronounc'd with all the drawling sedateness of a philosopher; or bawl'd out with noise instead of vehemence; with madness instead of fire, and accompany'd with gestures only reconcileable to an imagination of the players being drunk in earnest.

An author in the distribution of what he calls the good things in a comedy, throws a delicacy of sentiment and a polite wit into the character of a footman, or a chambermaid; or puts madrigals and epigrams into the mouth of an actor, agitated by some of the most violent passions; and the vulgar give him for this the credit of having too much wit: It wou'd be more just to determine of him that he had too little judgment, and was but very poorly qualify'd in that most material of all the requisites of an author for the stage, the imitation of real life; let us not call the one of these absurdities wit, or the other playing with fire.

We may add that many an actor in performing a favourite part, gives himself up to an extravagance of passion in places where the sense of the author, and circumstances of the character



character he represents require no such thing; or if his vehemence be not quite out of place, it is often of a very absurd kind. These are faults which a man falls into, not thro' an excess of fire, as the vulgar suppose, but thro' a defect of it. He does not perceive that he is exerting his utmost efforts to express a passion which he is not to feel; and in consequence of that blunder he does not feel what he ought; and therefore 'tis impossible he should express it. In this case the actor greatly misinforms himself if he thinks it is fire that he perceives in his temper; it is rather a madness, an absurdity, and as such the more judicious of the audience will be sure to look on it.

Perhaps it will yet remain the opinion of some, that tho' an extravagant action or a misplaced rant, do not deserve the name of an excess of fire; yet in many characters, even where the player is not blameable in either of these points, he may too freely give himself up to the ardour of his disposition, and be carried away into faults by it.

Under the specious pretence that every actor ought to tie himself down to a certain and regular gradation in his playing, there may be some who will object that the warmth of theatrical action ought only to disclose itself successively; and that if the player, at the first instant of his entering into a passionate part, throws into it all that fire which he ought to have expressed at some period afterwards, it will be just to reproach him with having too much fire, in that first instant.

There is more of shew than of solidity in this argument; and it is indeed already answered by

the distinction which we have established between the vehemence of action, and the true fire of the actor. The best judges indeed often wish to see the player raising himself into the most violent emotions only by regular degrees, but they wou'd notwithstanding have his fire be always equal. Nature knows no gradations in the rise of this enlivening spirit; nor do they expect to find any on the stage, where every man who knows what he ought to be pleas'd with, likes to see the readiness of conception and vivacity of expression always at their utmost height.

The actress who has tenderness and sensibility in her nature, and who easily and readily feels every passion that the author intends she shou'd describe, is not for that reason to flatter herself that she may excel in the profession without fire. To feel the passions we are to point out to others, is certainly a necessary first step to perfection in playing; but it is not all that is expected of the performer, they may even be exquisitely felt, and yet for want of this fire they may be but very ill expressed. The feeling them strongly may indeed be alone sufficient for the affecting a few particular persons; but when a numerous audience is to be mov'd in the strongest and most pathetic manner, much more is requir'd.

In this case there is a necessity not only for a due portion of fire, but even of vehemence. Both these are as requisite here, to the affecting the audience, as agitation of the air is to flame. A fire may be sufficient to warm, nay to burn the neighbouring objects, while it smothers within its bounds; but it will never take place upon more distant things, unless

it

it have the assistance of a strong mind to promote and carry on its ravages.

The player, who wants feeling, will never be allow'd by those who are judges to be a good one, tho' he may be acknowledged to have the declamatory talents of some of our best orators ; and even he who does not want this great qualification, but who, tho' he has it, wants fire to give it force and lustre, and who cannot be vehement, when the circumstances of the character he represents require it, will always find his reputation as inferior to that of the performer, who is able to add to the same sensibility, the force of that warmth and energy we have been celebrating, as the success of that orator, whose elocution does not come up to the merits of his reasoning, will be to that of him in whom the auditors find both those advantages united and acting on them together.

We are ready to believe that Mr. *Berry* in the character of *Sciolto*, actually feels the shock the author represents him under, when his daughter is prov'd to be a prostitute : It ought to be allow'd him, that we even see in his countenance the anguish, rage and despair, which the author meant to describe in that affecting circumstance ; but when he speaks,

It is enough, but I am slow to execute  
And justice lingers in my lazy hand——  
Thus let me wipe dishonour from my name,  
And cut thee from the earth, thou stain to goodness.

Or when he afterwards, with eyes big with real tears, says to *Altamont*,

Hast thou not read what brave *Virginus* did ;  
 With his own hand, he slew his only daughter  
 To save her from the fierce Decemvir's lust.  
 He slew her, yet unspotted, to prevent  
 The shame that he might know — Then what  
     shou'd I do ?  
 But thou hast ty'd my hand. I will not kill her,  
 But by the ruin she has brought upon us,  
 The common infamy that brands us both,  
 She shall not 'scape.

When this player, we wou'd observe, pronounces these lines, we cannot but acknowledge from his countenance, that he feels the meaning of them strongly ; but we find he is very little able to give expression to that feeling. Let us compare this with the rage and anguish of a father, in the before quoted King *Lear*, and remember how they discover themselves in the voice, as well as countenance of Mr. *Garrick* when he plays that character, and we shall see the truth of what we have observed as to the superiority of the joint powers of sensibility and elevation above that of feeling alone in its strongest light. With what a heartfelt anguish does he burn at the ingratitude of his child, and with what amazing force does he convey his inmost sentiments on it to us, when he cries out,

Hear nature !

Dear goddess, hear ! and if thou dost intend  
 To make that creature fruitful, change thy purpose,  
 Pronounce upon her womb the barren curse,  
 That from her blasted body never spring  
 A child to honour her—but if she must bring forth,  
 Defeat her joy with some distorted birth,

Or



Or monstrous form, the prodigy o'the time,  
 And so perverse of spirit, that it may live  
 Her torment, as 'twas born ; to fret her cheeks  
 With constant tears, and wrinkle her young brow,  
 Turn all her mother's pains to shame and scorn,  
 That she may curse her crime too late, and feel  
 How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is  
 To have a thankless child. —

We wou'd not be understood, even in this eminent view of the superiority on the side of the player, who has both feeling and elocution, to mean that he who has only one of them, is useless in a theatre. We have (thanks to our poets of later times) scenes in which a man who has nothing but a declamatory voice without feeling, nay almost without meaning, may acquit himself well enough: And *Shakespeare's* self has given us many instances, in which the other quality sensibility alone will do; in which power of voice or propriety of figure are not wanting, but if the player have only feeling in himself, he will make every body else feel with him sufficiently. The character of the old servant *Adam*, in *As you like it*, is of this kind: And had not good fortune rather than judgment thrown it into the manager's way, to give this part to the abovementioned Mr. *Berry*, perhaps neither they or we had ever known, that in his proper way he is one of the best players of the time.

When we see that honest veteran come upon the stage, his low condition, and his venerable looks, give us no room to expect elocution from him; all that we require in a character like this, is nature; and its utmost merit is the being  
 strongly



strongly felt by the performer. We did not know how strongly it was possible for us to be affected, only by seeing that an actor was so, till this person entering with his young master, warn'd him from the house of his treacherous and tyrannic brother; told him the danger of being too meritorious in such a place of wickedness; and added,

Your virtues, gentle master,  
Are sanctify'd and holy traitors to you.  
O what a world is this, when what is comely  
Envenoms him that bears it,  
O unhappy youth,  
Come not within these doors, this is no place  
for you,  
This house is but a butchery  
Abhor it, fear it, do not enter it.

The poet has with great art introduc'd the old man's reason for loving this his young master preferably to the elder and richer son, by making him call him *the Memory of old sir Rowland*. We are strongly affected by the honesty and friendship of this venerable servant, as he delivers to him without much ornament the cautions above mention'd; but how are our hearts struck within us, when to the despair of his young master, on the thought of his flying to misery and want from the tyranny of his cruel brother, he answers,

I have five hundred crowns,  
The thrifty hire I sav'd under your father,  
Which I did store to be my foster nurse  
When service should in my old limbs lie lame,  
And unregarded age in holes be thrown.

Take

Take that, and he that doth the ravens feed;  
Yea providently caters for the sparrow;  
Be comfort to my age. Here is the gold;  
All this I give you. Let me be your servant,  
Tho' I look old, yet I am strong and lusty;  
For in my youth, I never did apply  
Hot and rebellious liquors to my blood,  
Nor did I with unbashful forehead, woo  
The means of weakness and debility;  
Therefore my age is as a lusty winter,  
Frosty, but kindly——Let me go with you,  
I'll do the service of a younger man  
In all your business and necessities.

The unfeigned tears that trickled down the player's cheeks, as he delivered this generous and noble speech, were accompany'd with those of every spectator; and the applause that succeed-  
ed these, shew'd sufficiently the sense of the audience, and spoke in the strongest terms the praises of that sensibility, that feeling, which we are so earnestly recommending to every other player.

An expression like this, dictated only by a sense of the nature of the part, is in many other cases, as well as the present instance, preferable to all the noise and violence the most boisterous player cou'd employ in it.

Vehemence in an actor when ill placed, or when carry'd beyond the circumstances of the character he represents, or beyond truth or probability, will always be ridiculous: 'Tis only the common herd of an audience who are ready to say, that provided the player affects them strongly, 'tis no matter whether that be done justly or not; but the severest judge will allow that as an  
absolute

absolute perfection is not easy to be arriv'd at in those parts of a character, where the author means that the performer shou'd exert this quality, it is much better that he shou'd run beyond the goal than fall short of it.

The first intent of all playing is to affect and move the audience, and in all theatrical performances, 'tis an invariable rule that the coldest representation is the most defective. The principal thing the actor has to observe, when the circumstances of his part make it necessary that he shou'd be vehement, is that he does not strain his voice, so as to render it incapable of carrying him thro' the rest of the piece. We should with great justice laugh at the man engaged in a race, who shou'd throw out his legs to their utmost speed at the setting out, and by that means render'd them incapable of carrying him to the end of the course.

There are some peculiar characters on the *English* stage, and those of the very first consequence, in which a caution of this kind is very necessary to the actor; we may number among the principal of these, *Pierre* in *Venice Preserv'd*, *Richard* the Third, *Othello*, and *Orestes*.

Our players conduct themselves very differently on this occasion; and run into the two contrary faults, some of ranting themselves hoarse in the first scenes, so as to be incapable of speaking the succeeding and finer parts of the character in such a manner as to be heard; and others of saving themselves for these most interesting passages at the expence of being cold, insipid and contemptible in all the rest. In the character of *Orestes*, in the *Distressed Mother*, there is one capital scene in which the player is to exert his  
utmost

utmost power, and which requires him to be in a condition far from tir'd, when he enters on it. We cannot but think however that Mr. *Ryan*, tho' excellent in this peculiar scene of that play, ought to be reminded, that this is only a small part of the character of that hero, and that we purchase his excellence in it at too dear a rate, when he is so very tame as he has lately been in the preceding scenes of the play, in order to the saving himself for this. 'Tis not many nights since we saw him in this character, when a whole audience beheld him contemptible throughout the whole of his principal scene with *Hermione*; in which he was quite cool, and philosophic, while she was cunningly working him up to madness by every art that woman cou'd use; by promises, by threats, by soothing his passion, and by confessing a dread of her own frailty in regard to his rival. To all this he answer'd with all the calmness imaginable, with a soft accent and smooth weak voice.

Madam, your love has made him criminal.  
 You shall have vengeance, I'll have vengeance too.  
 ——First let me tear him piece-meal—He shall die.  
 ——He dies by me—Have you a foe,  
 And shall I let him live? my rival too?  
 E'er yon meridian sun declines, he dies.

We cannot but know that the poet meant these expressions shou'd give us an idea of rage and fierceness in the speaker; and that there ought to have been a strong conflict expressed in the character between love, revenge, and honour, and visible in his air, his countenance, and his whole deportment, while the princess thus work'd him to  
 her



her purpose, tho' at the expence of his honour; but we saw nothing of all this. How great a figure might a player make in such a scene; who had sufficient feeling and expression about him, and who dar'd to employ them; and how contemptible must the coldness and insensibility of the performer, who is tame and patient under all this, appear to us, notwithstanding that we know he is reserving himself for something great that is to come? Nay 'tis even the worse for it, as our knowing this to be the reason of the unnatural defect we see, carries us forward to the succeeding scenes, and hurts that appearance of reality which is the greatest of all the beauties in a theatrical representation.

We remember the time when Mr. Garrick, thro' a disdain of the meanness of this sort of artifice, ran into the other extreme in many parallel cases; when he always run himself so out of voice in some of the first scenes in the character of *Pierre* in *Venice Preserv'd*, that he cou'd not even be heard when he came afterwards to that great scene in which he reproaches the senate: And when in *Richard* he cry'd out to *Richmond*, *Richard is hoarse with calling thee to battle*, the audience was so sensible of the truth of the expression, that they cou'd scarce distinguish the sounds that convey'd it to them. But to the honour of this inimitable player, he has now fallen into so happy a method of moderating his fire in the beginnings of these characters, in order to the preserving himself intelligible to their end, that he might be set up as an example to the performer we have just nam'd, had not we an opportunity of recommending the yet more masterly address of the veteran of the other house in  
this



this very part of *Pierre*, who has form'd the true rule by which to proportion the due strength of voice to every part of that noble character, so as not to let us perceive a want of force any where, and yet to keep a reserve to support himself in the most violent scenes, with a power and energy, that the rest of the great performers of the time must allow us to say, nobody ever did, or perhaps ever will, come up to.

How exquisite is the management of this player, in giving a strength that scarce any body besides himself ever gave to any thing, to that scene where he braves the rest of the conspirators, and in the midst of all their threatnings against *Jaffier* asks them,

Who talks of killing? — Who's he'll shed the  
blood

That's dear to me? is't you? or you? or you, sir?  
What not one speak? how you stand gaping all!  
On your grave oracle, your wooden god there.

And continues,

One such word more, by heavens I'll to the senate,  
And hang you all like dogs in clusters.  
Why peep your coward swords half out their shells?  
Why do you not all brandish them like mine?  
You fear to die, yet you dare talk of killing.

We remember *Walker*'s straining till he was quite hoarse at this scene, and incapacitating himself for any thing of consequence that was to follow, and we have seen something not unlike it in some later players of very great merit; but how are we surpriz'd to find in Mr. *Quin*, that all the

D

fire

fire he throws into this part of his character, is but of a subordinate kind, when we see him under greater provocations, and before a greater assembly, rising upon us to a much nobler height; and telling the trembling senate of *Venice*, with a majesty, that it is easy to admire, impossible to imitate,

You my lords and fathers  
(As you are pleas'd to call your selves) of *Venice*,  
If you sit here to guide the course of justice,  
Why these disgraceful chains upon the limbs  
That have so often labour'd in your service?  
Are these the wreaths of triumph you bestow  
On those, who bring you conquest home and  
honours?  
Are these the trophies I've deserv'd for fighting  
Your battles with confederated powers?  
When winds and seas conspir'd to overthrow you,  
And brought the fleets of *Spain* to your own  
harbours:  
When your great Duke shrunk trembling in your  
palace,  
And saw your wife, the Adriatick plow'd  
Like a leud whore, by bolder prow than yours.  
Step'd not I forth, and taught your loose *Venetians*  
The task of honour, and the way to greatness;  
Rais'd you from your capitulating fears  
To stipulate the terms of su'd for peace?  
And this my recompence! If I'm a traitor,  
Produce my charge—  
Shew me the wretch that's base enough,  
And brave enough, to tell me I'm a traitor.

After admiring the superior force and dignity with which this inimitable player has rais'd the vehemence of this part of his character so highly beyond

beyond every thing we had before admir'd ; how are we at length, on the appearance of *Jaffier*, and his suing to him for a reconciliation, astonish'd to find that even this also was but a force of a subordinate kind, and to see that he has yet reserved an infinitely greater store of it, for that keenest of all resentments which is due to a violated friendship. Even the vehemence of that execration with which he leaves the senate,

Curs'd be your senate ! curs'd your constitution,  
The curse of growing factions and divisions  
Still vex your councils, shake your publick safety,  
And make the robes of government you wear  
Hateful to you, as these base chains to me.

Is nothing when compar'd to that with which  
he tells the friend who had betray'd him,

Hast thou not wrong'd me? dar'st thou call thyself  
That once lov'd valu'd friend of mine,  
And swear thou hast not wrong'd me? Whence  
these chains,

Whence this vile death that I may meet this  
moment,

Whence this dishonour, but from thee, thou  
base one !

——And wou'dst thou have me live on terms  
like thine,

Base as thou'rt false?

Leave me—Nay then thus, thus I throw thee  
from me ;

And curses great as is thy falsehood catch thee.

Whoever has heard these and the rest of the keen and disdainful reproaches which *Pierre* justly throws on his friend, utter'd from the mouth of Mr. *Quin*, will agree with us, that the whole compass of the *English* stage affords nothing greater; and yet these in this judicious performer, are but the sequel of a whole part, and that a long one, kept up throughout with due dignity and spirit.

#### C H A P. IV.

*Whether it wou'd be to the Advantage of all Players to be of a distinguished Figure?*

THERE are a great many people that frequent the playhouses, who are less apt to be affected with those objects which are form'd to entertain the understanding, than with those destin'd to act principally on the senses. These gentlemen are oftener drawn to the theatres by the names of the actresses, than by those of the characters which they are there to perform; and as they are capable of judging of no perfections but those of figure and person, they are always disposed to take an amiable face for a very great talent in a performer; and wou'd have even a *Mistress Amlet* or a *Lady Bountiful*, have a regular set of features, a snowy neck, or an elegant person.

Tell these people that there is a new actress to appear upon the stage such a night, the first question they ask is, Is she handsome? And 'tis ten to one, but they forget to enquire at all whether she has any merit in the profession.

The



The women pretend indeed that the figure of a performer of the other sex, is the article they least of all regard in him as an actor; but the player who has not some personal charms about him, will always find it extremely difficult to get their good opinion. The criticisms that one hears among this part of an audience, always run more upon the imperfections or blemishes in the face or figure of the actor, than on those of his performance; and almost on every occasion of this kind, we shall find that the elegant or disagreeable mien of the player is what has most taken up their attention.

Whoever therefore wou'd propose to himself to acquire fame on the stage, in the eye of the polite world, and to become the favourite of a numerous party, must remember that a graceful figure and an engaging aspect are almost absolutely necessary to it. We have had very few instances in *England*, in which an actor has been able to make his way to applause in the higher characters without personal charms; and in *France* it is an allow'd truth, that no man ever did or ever will be a favourite in this capacity without them.

'Tis only the herd of an audience however that fall into this sort of absurdity in their opinions; the better judges despise such prejudices. They agree, that there are indeed some characters, in which we find, by the conduct of the scene, that the actor is out of nature if he have not something amiable about him. They do not deny that even in most other parts a good person in the actor, is far from being indifferent; but they assert with great truth and justice, that our nicety in requiring a good face and well propor-



tion'd figure in the generality of performers is very absurd and unreasonable when we carry it, as is usually done, beyond its just bounds. One cannot but acknowledge indeed that there is some sort of justice in the disgust which an audience is apt to express at the disproportion'd and shocking figures of some who thrust themselves upon the stage; but it is unpardonable, it is contrary to justice, to our own interests, and to the necessities of a theatre, to determine against admitting into a company any man, of whatever merit he may be possess'd, if he happen not to have a face or shape more elegantly form'd than those of the common run of mankind.

There are indeed some bodily imperfections which can never be suffered in the player, tho' it is very possible that people in real life may have them; nay even tho' the person whose character they are to represent on the stage actually had them. A hump'd back, or a leg half a foot shorter than the other, would not have prevented *Cæsar* or *Scipio* from being in real life esteemed the first and greatest men of the world; yet if a man, who had either of these natural imperfections, tho' he had all the merit imaginable as a player, shou'd attempt with these very imperfections to represent heroes, who also had them, he wou'd be hiss'd, and perhaps pelted off the stage, for his absurdity; we should never be able to bring ourselves to overlook those personal imperfections in the player, which the people of the age he liv'd in, might think it easy to overlook in the person; or ourselves in the history of the *Heroe*.

The Justice *Balance* of the *Recruiting Officer*, might possibly in real life have his face disfigured  
by

by a wen, or drawn to one side by a large scar, and we should easily have disregarded it; but we should never be able to reconcile the audience to a man, who, with either of these natural deformities, tho' join'd with ever so much merit, shou'd attempt to personate the character of this generous friend and father.

Nay, we have had a proof that even the peculiar bodily imperfection which is mentioned in the play itself as belonging to the hero of it; and which we even expect the performer shou'd counterfeit to us by bolsters and bandages, yet if he be unhappy enough really to possess it, he offends us in the representation. There is some where about town a person of the name of *Machen*, who has been long the darling of the theatres at the *Blue Boar*, the *Tennis Court* in *James-Street*, and sometimes of the *Bartholomew-Booths*; and who has of late been honour'd with the title of the lame actor of low comedy in Mr. *Foot's* drolleries. This person has, from an habitual attendance on the players, and a labour'd imitation of them for perhaps forty years together, acquir'd a knack of speaking something that sounds like tragedy declamation. It is his misfortune to be lame of one leg; which is so much shorter than the other, that the highest heel he can wear is not enough to raise that side of his body to a level with the rest. Tragedy is the darling passion of this player, and he concluded, from this natural imperfection, he was the fittest of all men to perform the character of *Richard III.* which *Shakespeare* himself (with how much justice we do not presume to say) has figured to us as lame.

Vast were the expectations of applause with which this man had flatter'd himself, when he should come to that part of the character where this peculiar natural defect, by which he thought himself qualified to perform the part, should come on: But what was the event? The audience, when he hop'd across the stage as he spoke the line,

Dogs bark at me as I halt by them,

instead of the applause he listen'd for, burst out into a loud laugh. They could never reconcile themselves to have an original impos'd on them, when they expected or desir'd no more than a copy.

There is a seeming contradiction and absurdity in the judgment of the world on these occasions: but it is only such, 'tis not a real one. There is even, when duly consider'd, a sort of justice in it. We look on the soul alone as constituting the man; and in instances where we know that nature had indeed given a defective body for the habitation of a great and noble mind, we expect that the stage, so far as concerns the figure of the hero, should redress these injuries, or at least should hide from our inspection these scarce justifiable caprices. As tragedy pleases principally by the air of grandeur and nobility which it gives to men, we are not willing that in the paintings it gives us of great events and of exalted personages, any thing should occur which might take off from that honour and esteem which it naturally gives us for the human species.

As we seek in tragedy after objects that may flatter our pride, we wish to find in comedy such  
as

as may keep up our gaiety and spirits : our intent is by no means answer'd, if while the character the player acts makes us merry, the figure of his body causes a melancholy, by putting us continually in mind what frail creatures we are, and how liable to be render'd even ridiculous by defects which may arise from accidents. Absolute deformity in a player is not to expect from us the same sort of indulgence that we sometimes bestow upon persons in whom there is at worst but an entire absence of every thing that is pleasing : and on the other hand, a mere want of charms in the person of an actor, ought never to prejudice us against him in the manner that an absolute deformity would. Let us be sensible of perfections and imperfections, but let us also be just ; let us pay a respect to personal charms where we find them, but let us not despise merit for the want of them, when there is nothing absolutely shocking in the person who is possess'd of it. Let us not refuse ourselves the pleasure of being affected in the most agreeable manner by an actress who has real charms in her face or figure ; but if another happens to want this lucky advantage, let us not for that reason refuse her our applause, if she has other powers of pleasing which are not plac'd within the reach of age or diseases.

Personal charms being more peculiarly the advantages of the other sex than of ours, the ladies may be more naturally expected to overlook the want of this sort of merit in an actor, than we to pardon it in an actress. We can easily bring ourselves to be satisfy'd with any thing of our own sex that has real merit, and has no real deformity ; and we would fain bring them to consider, that the actor need not always be



look'd upon as the lover, and that an over-severity against the deficiencies of external charms would often deprive the stage of persons who are indebted to nature for qualifications infinitely more valuable than those which we are angry with her for having been capricious enough to refuse them.

We don't know our own interest if we insist that every actor and actress that appears before us should be of an extraordinary graceful figure; we consider nothing of the laws, the necessities, or the conveniencies of a theatre when we expect it; and perhaps it were to be wish'd, even for our own better entertainment, not only that all the personal charms we are so fond of were not to fall to the share of every one of our actors, but even that some of the persons who are to entertain us in this way, might not have any one of them.

Regular features, well proportion'd limbs, and a noble and distinguishing air and deportment, ought without doubt, in general, to prejudice us greatly in favour of a performer; but there are evidently some characters in which these accomplishments are not only useless, but it wou'd even be a merit in the player to want them. We cannot but acknowledge that an audience frequently bears the breach of all probability on these occasions without seeming hurt by it; that it is often even with a particular pleasure, that we see a fine blooming young creature take up the character of an old hag; or an actor form'd by nature to please by his aspect, disguise himself, and hide all those charms under the habit of a coarse and clumsy rustic: People indeed go to a play, ~~as~~ they themselves acknowledge, not to see realities,



alities, but imitations of them; and however severe they may be on the subject of conformity in general between the original and the copy that is presented to them, yet they universally expect that the actors should not have the defects and imperfections in themselves, which they are to represent under their characters. The copy often charms them, when the original wou'd be disagreeable; a player who was to represent a drunken man, would be very ill received if he chose to come drunk upon the stage to do it. But after acknowledging all this, we are to distinguish between the peculiar characters of comedy and the general form of its representations.

There are certain characters in which the player is to entertain us only by the imitation of something that is extremely ridiculous in real life. And the pleasure which we are to receive from some others, is meant to be form'd only by contrast; whether that be between the pretensions of the personage, and the title he has to expect them to be received, or between the effects which he ought to produce among the other persons with whom he is concerned in the course of the play, and those he really does produce among them.

In the parts of the first kind, the more the actor is possess'd of those perfections that are the direct opposites to the defects which the reality of the character requires him to imitate, the more we are pleased with him; and the more merit we allow him in giving us a true and faithful portrait of the imperfections which nature had given him no means to imitate. In those of the second kind, the fewer the player has of those accomplishments, on which the person he is to

represent piques himself, or which the other ridiculous or extravagant characters of the piece are made to allow and reverence in him, the more evidently does he shew the ridiculous vanity, and blind presumption of the one, and the absurd judgment of the others; and of consequence the more of the true spirit of comedy does he throw into the character in the first case, and into the play in general in the last.

The part of a man whom the author means to represent as fond of aspiring to the character of a beau, without any of the natural advantages or acquir'd accomplishments for it, will excite less laughter in the audience, and consequently will less answer the intent of the author, as well as of every body concern'd, if it is play'd by a clean genteel fellow who is well qualify'd to have excell'd in the part of a polite gentleman, or whom we have been us'd to see do so in other plays; than if performed by one, who has no one requisite toward the real character of the beau either from nature or art. The blunder of some foolish person in a play, who takes a footman for a man of quality, will give us much less pleasure, if we see the part of the footman performed by a man of a good mien and genteel deportment, than if it be executed by one who carries about him nothing from nature that can justify the mistake.

It appears therefore, that instead of its being necessary or convenient that all the actors of a company shou'd have the advantage of elegant and handsome figures, it is absolutely essential to our being well pleased at their representations, that some of them be not of this fine turn.

The

The players are not however to extend this maxim too far in their own favour: We allow them to be in many cases qualify'd for the stage, tho' they want certain natural beauties; but we do not allow so much if they have the opposite defects or blemishes. There is a great difference between the absence of beauty, and deformity: and in the case before us we never can receive people well; unless they are free from all blemishes in figure; many of which, tho' we pass over easily enough in persons in any other road of life, we judge intolerable on the stage.

The profession of a player requires, and the exercise of it supposes, that a man has a good understanding, and some natural graces. We expect that his countenance, his look, declare to us, at first sight, that he possesses the first of these qualifications; and we cannot be contented if we find an external form that looks incompatible with the other.

We expect that every player should have a lively and expressive countenance; we require this even in those whose sole business it is to play the characters of dupes and fools; for in the case of all defects and imperfections, it is, as has already been observed, the copy, and not the original, that we expect to see on the stage; nor should we allow any merit in the actor, who appear'd to us no other than just what he really was. We can give no applause to the man who represents a fool to us upon the stage, unless we know that he does not act the part of a fool in the world; and in all other cases of this kind, we the more applaud the art of the player, as we know it to be the less assisted by nature.

If



If the managers of our theatrical entertainments should chuse to put Mr. *Anderson* or Mr. *Usher* into the part of *Abel Drugger* it is possible that the folly of the part might hang more naturally about them than it does about Mr. *Garrick*; but 'tis not this that an audience expects on such occasions: we may venture to foretel, that neither we nor our children shall ever see that character with so much pleasure as we now see it play'd by Mr. *Garrick*, unless, which is scarce probable, another actor of equal merit should undertake it.

Whatever player has the happiness of an expressive countenance, may flatter himself that he is possess'd of one of the greatest natural advantages that fall in the way of his profession; but he is to remember, that it is an advantage which requires many others to accompany it, and that shews in a very ill light the defect, where there are not such. A sprightliness of countenance, and a lively, piercing, and distinguishing look, necessarily require a graceful action in the whole figure to support and enforce them: without these the graces of the other look unnatural; and these so much depend upon the symmetry of the body, and the just arrangement of its parts, that all the art and address in the world cannot give them, without these natural advantages. The arms too long or too short, the shoulders too high, or any other visible and obvious disproportion of the limbs, on which the action peculiar to the stage principally depends, render the player, in spite of all other advantages, necessarily disagreeable to us, because they make his action necessarily defective. Imperfections of this kind, to a certain degree, are not observable in the generality of men; but in the very same height in which

in



## *The* A C T O R.

in others they are not disagreeable, they are insupportable in the player. If a man will content himself to live among the multitude, we do not pretend to laugh at him, because his mouth is somewhat too large, or his legs are a little ill-shap'd; but if he will thrust himself upon us in a light that calls for our strictest examination, his mouth, which before would have been little noticed, becomes then enormous; and his legs, which only seem'd not to call for our praise, now draw upon them our severest censure.

It is not only necessary that the several exterior parts of the player bear a due proportion to each other; but his whole figure requires also its regularities.—His stature is not to be out of the common rule, or at least it must not be too much so. Those who are extremely particular, unless supported by very eminent merit, ought to be proscrib'd the theatre, either for their gigantic or their dwarfish stature. It is very difficult for a man of too large a size to be graceful in many of his actions; and smallness of stature, when not absolutely dwarfish, tho' it does not wholly exclude the person from the stage, yet we continually see it makes him want a thousand advantages which people of a better figure have; and is even ridiculous in many things which would extremely well become a man a few inches taller. To see people in the galleries laugh in the midst of a serious scene, when such a player expresses a violent rage and menacing indignation, and that even tho' he does it ever so justly, would make one apt to say, that certain passions were not allow'd to persons under a certain standard. This would be going too far indeed; but perhaps it will be no more than  
just

just to say, that they are not so conveniently express'd by such persons as they may be by others; and that the expressing a transport of violent rage, or the inspiring an audience with a reverence for the character represented, are not so properly in the way of men of this sort of figure, nor are of the number of things which they are formed by nature to excel in.

The actions of the player are all to be borrow'd from those of people in real life; and whenever we see him representing a character on the stage, our imagination sets him in a manner in the place of a man acting in the world, and views him in the circumstance and situation of the person to whom the sentiments he delivers properly belong: he should therefore always be in some degree the sort of man to whom not only such thoughts, such resolutions, but such a deportment as he assumes also is natural; since he is to make the same impression on us as the real character would. We are too apt to laugh at the sight of a trifling and contemptible figure, agitated by all the noble fury of a violent rage, and cannot prevent our imagination from recollecting that we see the player, not the person represented; and when this unlucky agent proceeds to carry the hero off the stage, and suppose him exerting the like emotions in the same manner in real life, we cannot help smiling at the idea of the ridiculous figure he would then make with them.

The man of a stature smaller than ordinary appears then to be improper for the capital characters in tragedy; and if we were rigid in our determinations, we might also (unless any peculiar merit pleaded in his favour) take from him all the principal parts in comedy, and only bear  
with

with him in those particular characters in which the deficiency of his height would serve to make the ridicule he was destin'd to raise, more strong than it could be if given us from a man of a more pleasing figure.

These are considerations of the utmost weight, and such as a very great share of merit has often been forc'd to yield to. Our managers have more than once rejected persons who have offer'd themselves, not only for playing the first characters, but even the subordinate ones, merely for want of height, tho' they have not been deficient in any other particulars: and we have seen within these few years, that when Mr. *Johnson*, a person of considerable merit in tragedy, but of an enormous stature, was received by a manager who had more good nature than the gentlemen in that station usually have; it was in vain that he attempted to bring the audience to approve him, even with the advantages of an expressive countenance, a sonorous voice, and a majestic deportment. He appear'd a giant among a nation of dwarfs; a *Gulliver* surrounded by a *Lilliputian* army: if he was engag'd in a quarrel, it was no merit in him to conquer a man whom he seem'd so vastly an over-match for; and if he made love, we had no idea but of a *Polypheme* and *Galatea*; and thought it unnatural for a little creature to venture to like him. The disproportion between this gentleman's stature and that of Mrs. *Giffard*, with whom he usually play'd, was esteem'd to be such as no audience would ever be brought to bear; but we are happy enough now to be taught otherwise: we have the good fortune to live in an age when there are players whose merit is infinitely an over-

ballance



ballance to this sort of disproportion; and in whom the faculties of the soul shine so strongly, that we have no attention to bestow upon the height or shortness of the body.

The world has so entirely overlook'd the deficiency of stature in Mr. *Garrick*, that he now leaves off the cork soles which us'd to give him half an inch in height; and one of the greatest genius's of the age has thought it necessary to write a treatise (which to the misfortune of the world is yet in manuscript) to prove that he is not six foot high.

The disproportion in stature between Mr. *Barry* and Mrs. *Cibber* is scarce less than that which us'd to shock us between Mr. *Johnson* and Mrs. *Giffard*; yet have these two egregious deluders in that respect perfectly blinded our eyes. Who ever thought it monstrous that *Barry* in *Caesar* sigh'd for this lady in *Monimia*, or that she met his passion with an equal warmth; or who ever thought of the disproportion between *Romeo* and *Juliet*, where that excellent player, with a voice sweet as an angel's song, says to her,

The saints that heard our vows and know our loves,

Seeing thy faith and thy unspotted truth,  
Will sure take care and let no wrongs annoy thee.

Upon my knees I'll ask them ev'ry day,  
How my kind *Juliet* does? and ev'ry night,  
In the severe distresses of my fate,  
As I perhaps shall wander thro' the desert,  
And want a place to rest my weary head on,  
I'll count the stars and bless 'em as they shine,  
And court them all for my dear *Juliet*'s safety.  
The



The tenderness that such an actor as Mr. *Barry* is able to throw into a speech like this, leaves us no power to attend to height or shortness ; nor did any one ever think him too tall for the tender creature he was courting, when with a heartfelt passion, never so well express'd before, he speaks the best lines that ever were written on the occasion, much better than they ever were spoken before, on his seeing the object of his wishes at her window,

——What light thro' yonder window breaks ?  
It is the east, and *Juliet* is the sun.  
See how she hangs upon the cheek of night  
Fairer than snow upon a raven's back,  
Brighter than brilliants in an *Ethiop's* ear ;  
Were she in yonder sphere, she'd shine so bright,  
The birds would sing, and think the day were  
breaking.  
See how she leans her cheek upon her hand.  
O that I were a glove upon that hand,  
That I might kiss that cheek.

The reader will pardon us on this and some other occasions, that where we quote passages from plays, we give them as the author gives them, not as the butcherly hand of a blockhead prompter may have lop'd them, or as the unequal genius of some bungling critic may have attempted to mend them. Whoever remembers the merit of the players speaking the things we celebrate them for, we are pretty confident will with us spoke them absolutely as we give them, that is, as the author gives them ; and if we add to this hint, the throwing in sometimes a line or two that  
the

they ought to speak, but by some infatuation do not, we hope they will thank us for it.

To return to our subject, we are to observe that no body who ever heard these speeches deliver'd by Mr. *Barry*, recollected how many inches he was taller than the lady he addresses them to ; nor have we less certain instances of the want of height being rendered imperceptible by the same sort of merit, than the redundance of it is in this instance.

We believe that Mr. *Garrick* is the smallest man that ever attempted the character of a king or hero, who makes the capital figure in the play he appears in ; but we also believe him to be one of the greatest men that ever did so. We have already quoted the excellencies of Mr. *Quin*, in the character of *Pierre*, whose figure all the world must allow pleads vastly in his advantage in the character of that great, that hardy commander. We expect, from the nature of the character, a man of stature in it ; yet we do not observe that Mr. *Garrick* is an inch too short in it while he plays it ; or scarce that he is a whit inferior to Mr. *Quin*, while he's saying to his false friend, who assures him he has taken care to save his life,

I scorn it more, because preserv'd by thee :  
And as when first my foolish heart took pity  
On thy misfortunes, sought thee in thy miseries,  
Reliev'd thy wants, and rais'd thee from the state  
Of wretchedness in which thy fate had plung'd  
thee,  
To rank thee in a list of noble friends,  
All I receiv'd in surety for thy truth  
Were unregarded oaths ; and this—this dagger,  
Giv'n

Giv'n with a worthless pledge, thou since hast  
 stol'n:

So I restore it back to thee again;  
 Swearing by all those pow'rs which thou hast  
 violated,

Never from this curs'd hour to hold communion,  
 Friendship, or interest with thee; tho' our years  
 Were to exceed those limited the world.

Take it—farewell—for now I owe thee nothing.

If we would see the power of art to hide the deficiencies of nature in regard to this performer in a yet stronger light, let us recollect him in *King Lear*. We are apt to believe that the want of figure never appear'd so glaringly in Mr. *Garrick* as in this character. It must be acknowledged that to look at him only, he appears rather a *Gomez* or a *Fondlewife* than a *British* monarch: but who ever recollected this when they heard him say to his unnatural daughter,

Blasts upon thee,

Th'untented woundings of a father's curse  
 Pierce every sense about thee. Old fond eyes  
 Lament this cause again, I'll pluck ye out,  
 And cast ye with the waters that ye lose  
 To temper clay.—No, gorgon, thou shalt  
 find

That I'll resume the shape which thou dost think  
 I have thrown off for ever.

If there be any thing that comes in competition with the unluckiness of this excellent player's figure in this character, it is the appearance he made in his new habit for *Othello*. We are us'd to see the greatest majesty imaginable express'd  
 through-

throughout that whole part; and tho' the joke was somewhat prematurely delivered to the public, we must acknowledge that the appearance he made in that tramontane dress made us rather expect to see a tea-kettle in his hand, than to hear the thundering speeches *Shakeſpear* has thrown into that character, come out of his mouth. Tho' we acknowledge that Mr. *Garrick* did well to part with this character to a man whose figure ſeems more adequate to our ideas of a heroe; yet we cannot but obſerve at the ſame time, that when he perform'd it, he no ſooner ſpoke than we forgot every thing we ſaw, to give attention to what we heard; and that notwithstanding his naturally contemptible figure, no man ever fill'd a ſtage with more majeſty than he, in thoſe ſpeeches in the third act, where he expreſſes all the rage and anguiſh mix'd together that words perhaps are capable of deſcribing.

Ha! false to me!

I ſwear 'tis better to be much abus'd,  
Than but to know't a little.

What ſenſe had I of her ſtolen hours of luſt;  
I ſaw it not, thought it not, it harm'd not me;  
I found not *Caffio's* kiſſes on her lips.—

He that is robb'd, not wanting what is ſtolen,  
Let him not know't, and he's not robb'd at all.

I had been happy if the general camp,  
Pioneers and all, had taſted her ſweet body,  
So I had nothing known! O now for ever  
Farewel the tranquil mind, farewel content,  
Farewel the plumed troops, and the big war,  
That make ambition virtue: O farewel  
The ſpirit-ſtirring drum, th' ear-piercing ſiſe,  
The royal banner, and all quality,

Pride,



Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious  
war :  
Farewel ! *Othello's* occupation's gone.

---

## R E F L E C T I O N S

*Naturally arising from the Subject of the  
first Book.*

### R E F L E C T I O N I.

*Those Actors who appear in subordinate Characters  
can no more succeed without a good Understanding,  
Sensibility, and Fire ; than those who play the  
principal Parts.*

THE hopes of receiving those warm, general, and repeated applauses, so earnestly desir'd by the writers of theatrical pieces, as well as by the performers in them, is by many understood to be restrain'd to those parts alone which make the capital figure in the piece, and to those performers only who are employ'd to play them. The amiable actress, they observe, who gives so many affecting graces to the tears and lamentations of *Monimia* ; or by an amazing contrast represents as naturally the perplexity and irresolution of a lady *Brute*, never fail'd to have as many lovers as there were men of the audience ; and the rival charmer of the other house, whose person is more striking than perhaps the best acting in the world ever was, or ever will be, is sure that a whole audience are impatient and eager till she enters on the stage, and never see her leave it but they curse the poet who made her part in  
the

the scene so short: there are however, among the class of under actresses, some whose envious disposition, impatient under the neglect of what they persuade themselves are equal merits and equal charms in their own persons; and to comfort themselves under the misfortune of not being in the same degree the idols of the public, tell the world that the *Cibbers* and the *Woffingtons* of the age would never have become the objects of such universal adoration, if it had not been their fortune to have early appear'd in the capital parts of some of the best of our plays; where the character they represented was too amiable not to interest every body in its favour, and where they had opportunities of shewing themselves under all the advantages that dress and the utmost art could give them. - They insist upon it, that the best actor in the world would lose much of the applause his real merit deserves, if always condemn'd to play subordinate characters: and that an actress, tho' form'd ever so perfectly to please and to charm, will always lose a considerable share of the natural effect of her beauty, when the principal concerns of the play, or the interests of the capital characters, do not all fall in with or depend upon the part she acts.

To do justice to the modern players we must allow, that as there are some among them who perform the parts of kings and princes, who would appear to much more advantage in the characters of footmen and bailiff's followers; as witness my lords of *Westmoreland* and *Mortimer*, with fifty others of the nature with good King *Duncan*; so there are others who perform so decently in their under characters, that we are apt to wish them in those people's places. Let us, however,  
examine

examine strictly into the merit of the cause, and we shall generally find that the opinion the lower players entertain of their being set in an ill light by acting the less important characters. is so very absurd, that people who are not overburthened with merit, have in that very cast of parts the only means of shining.

When Mr. *Foot* play'd *Othello* at the *Hay-market*, for the benefit of the very ill-treated Mr. *Macklin*, there was a person among the under actors, who had been instructed by that masterly judge of speaking, to pronounce about six lines sensibly, that never had been pronounced so before; and who acquir'd more applause by it than he had ever done in his whole life, tho' he had frequently appeared at some of the motley theatres above mention'd, in the characters of *King Richard*, *Bajazet*, *Torismond*, and my Lord *Townley*.

The person we hint at was one *York*; his part in *Othello* was that of *Montano*, who engages with and is wounded by *Cassio*. 'Tis the great reproach of our managers, that they esteem parts, not from the nature of them, but their quantity; and a long part or a short one are always understood as synonymous terms for a good and a bad one. In consequence of this, *Montano*, whose part in the whole does not much exceed a dozen lines, had been always us'd to be play'd at the theatres by a person somewhat above the degree of a scene-shifter, and what he spoke had been always laugh'd at accordingly: the audience were on this occasion surpriz'd, on *Othello's* asking this person the cause of a quarrel, for which he very severely reprimanded him, to hear him

E

answer

answer in an extremely sensible manner, tho' without any thing of the cant of tragedy,

Worthy *Othello*, I am hurt to danger.  
 Your officer *Iago* can inform you,  
 While I spare speech (which something now  
     offends me)  
 Of all that I do know;—nor know I ought  
 By me that's said or done amiss this night;  
 Unless self-charity be sometimes sin,  
 And to defend ourselves it be a crime,  
 When violence assails us.—

The audience look'd with astonishment at one another, and gave a thunder of applause: the young fellow was taken great notice of, was soon after promoted in one of the theatres, and put in a way of arriving at all that perfection in the profession, the presages of which the world thought they saw in him. He was not sensible, any more than other people, that to keep up his credit he must always act *Montanos*; and that, tho' he did this very well, he would have made a very miserable *Othello*. He obtain'd no more applause in the higher characters he afterwards was thrown into, than he had done before; and had not some good fortune carry'd him off the stage in time, he would certainly have again been reduc'd the next season to *Montano*, *Rosfano*, and the rest of the gentlemen of that character.

The subalterns of a company will not be persuaded of it, yet nothing is more certain than that there requires less merit and parts to make a figure in trifles, than in characters of consequence,  
 and



and that it is better to be applauded in a livery, than laugh'd at in embroidery.

The women have the same advantages in their way as the men, if they could but be brought to have modesty enough to be sensible of it. People who have seen Mrs. *Hale* in some of the capital characters, may think it a strange piece of absurdity to bring her in competition with the celebrated Mrs. *Woffington*: we allow very readily indeed, that in a *Lady Brute* or a *Jane Shore*, the advantage would appear very glaringly on Mrs. *Woffington's* side; but it is but very lately that we have had an opportunity of seeing them in what might have been thought a very disadvantageous light for Mrs. *Hale*, and yet in which we have seen that actress vastly superior to the other.

We have in short beheld the waiting gentlewoman *Hale* shew the queen *Woffington* in a very ill light in the comparison; we have seen the justness of playing in *Cephisa* quite eclipse the imaginary merit of *Andromache*. We do not pretend to say that if the tables had been turn'd, and the maid's character given to the mistress, the advantage would still have lain on that side: but if this is an allowed case, the question is, Whether, considering herself merely as an actress, it would not be more to Mrs. *Woffington's* advantage to play *Cephisa*?

The majesty of sorrow in  *Hector's Widow* was quite lost in the new dress'd *Andromache* of the fourth act; never indeed was a prettier figure seen upon the stage; but a wooden thing with wires might have equal'd it in gesture: the whole mind of the lady was now bent upon charming the audience as Mrs. *Woffington*, not as *Andro-*

*mache*; and while the pretty moppet talk'd of tears, which the vermillion on her cheeks prevented her from daring to use her handkerchief to dry up, and told her confidant, with all the tranquility, or rather all the unmeaning ease, of a person who was thinking of something else, that there was a dreadful conflict in her soul, and her own determin'd death was the end of it; the less ornamented *Cephisa* spoke her fears, her tenderness, in accents that affected even the galleries.

Who could bear to behold the simpering widow casting her eyes into the boxes to see who most admired her, or busy'd in the adjusting the fall of a flounce on her sleeve, while she was delivering, with all the inattention of a school-boy at his task,

I thought, *Cephisa*, thou hadst known thy mistress:

Couldst thou believe I would be false to *Hector*?  
Fall off from such a husband! break his rest,  
And call him to this hated light again,  
To see *Andromache* in *Pyrrhus*' arms!

Would *Hector*, were he living, and I dead,  
Forget *Andromache*, and wed her foe?

—*Andromache* will not be false to *Pyrrhus*,  
Nor violate her sacred love for *Hector*.

This hour I'll meet the king, the holy priest  
Shall join us, and confirm our mutual vows:

This will secure a father for my child;

That done, I have no farther use for life.

This pointed dagger, this determin'd hand,  
Shall save my virtue, and conclude my woe.

And,

And, on the contrary, who of the audience heard *Cephisa*, with all that terror and tenderness with which the nature of her part could inspire a sensible actress, during the time of *Andromache's* coming to the opening herself to her, deliver these broken sentences,

These dark unfoldings of your soul perplex me.

—For heaven's sake, madam, let me know your griefs :

—I cannot guess the drift your thoughts pursue ;  
But O ! I fear there's somewhat dreadful in it.

And,—

Oh ! madam, explain these riddles to my boding heart.

But acknowledg'd she deserv'd all the lavish praises that were prostituted to the other.

We do not mean to infer from this that Mrs. *Woffington* ought to be thrown out of her high characters, and Mrs. *Hale* put into them ; but that it would be well if the managers would bestow some more of these shorter parts in tragedies upon Mrs. *Hale*, when she is not better employ'd ; and that Mrs. *Woffington* may be put in mind to be a little more upon her guard the next time she acts a heroine.

That this lady is capable of succeeding in tragedy, is sufficiently evident from her playing *Jane Shore* : her whole deportment in that character was vastly superior to that of any actress we have ever seen in it ; but, unless she will be pleas'd to take a little more pains about her mind, and a little less about her face, for the future, we shall venture to prophecy to her, That when that face (as one time it will be) is not worth a

farthing, that mind will not be worth a fiftieth part of one.

The supposing that good parts make people play well, cannot indeed much injure the characters of performers of establish'd reputation; but the principle in itself is false, and the conclusions drawn from it occasion great imperfections in the generality of our theatrical representations. The greater part of the young players conclude from it, that as they can expect nothing better for some years, than to be made to put up with the least advantageous characters, they need not take a great deal of pains about them, since they would be only overlook'd if they did. They think it a sort of injustice in an audience to expect any great perfection in them, while they continue in this class; and persuade themselves, that they may pass well enough without many of those natural advantages which the players who appear in the principal characters are expected to have.

It is not to be denied indeed, that the excellence and importance of the character represented, contributes greatly to make the player shine in it; and it is equally true, that an audience are patient under a sort of mediocrity in the performers of the lower characters; people do not trouble themselves nearly so much about the manner in which the parts of little consequence to the fable are play'd, as about the justness of the representation of those which are essential to the conduct of the whole; but it is also true, that a good actor will often be able to give a sort of importance to a subordinate part, which, while as carelessly play'd as such usually are, the audience would never have known the beauty of.



of\*. It is also certain, that tho', in consideration of the deficiency of a number of proper subjects, we are induc'd to pardon in the persons who only play subordinate parts, the want of a peculiarly graceful figure, or of that superiority in the gifts of nature in general, which we look for in the players of the principal parts; yet we expect to find them tolerable: and indeed there is not one of the natural advantages which we require to be possess'd eminently by the first persons of the theatre, but we desire to see in some degree in all the rest.

Let us look into any one of the plays of our writers of credit, and examine by it the merits of this point. We shall find all the characters engag'd in the whole play concern'd in animating and giving force to every scene of it, either by the share their passions give them in the incidents of it, or by that which they give to the passions of the rest, by the difficulties and perplexities they find themselves in, or by those into which their cunning or their absurdity throw the persons whom they meant to injure or to serve: by their well-concerted blunders, the happy fruits of the sprightliness of the author's imagination, are the funds of everlasting pleasure to the greater part,

\* The very first-rate actors would find a way of encreasing their reputation greatly, if they would sometimes take a pride in appearing in the second or even the third parts in our better plays. The honour of occasioning an audience to discover beauties in a part which they had never found in it before, is, in reality, much superior to that of obtaining applauses from any of those grand characters which would itself command it, even tho' performed by but a moderate player.

at least, of every audience, and when nicely conducted, to the whole: or finally by their ambiguous actions or discourse, which, presenting two several faces, gives occasion to the error of some other character which is to be deceived, and by their continuance kept up in the mistake they were destin'd to raise. The very lowest characters in comedy are in this light to be continually in motion, and they are to keep our minds agitated during the whole piece: The very least among these are honoured with the name of actors in such or such a play; a name only given to the persons in a dramatic work, because they ought to be in continual action during the performance of it.

Voice and memory are said by many to be all the qualifications that are necessary to the subordinate actors: But can voice and memory alone be sufficient for the player in representing those characters, which, tho' not plac'd in the very fullest point of view, are yet often not less difficult to perform than even the capital part in the play? If the players of this lower rank want understanding, or fire; or, above all things, if nature has left them deficient in sensibility, how is it possible they should succeed, we don't say to please, but barely to make themselves supportable, even in the less considerable of those lesser characters; since we find there is not one of them on whom the other more eminent personages of the piece, in a greater or smaller degree, have not a dependance?

In tragedy the superiority of one of the parts of the play to another, is much greater than in comedy; but even the very lowest of the performers in these pieces, must not be wanting in the talents, at least in some degree, by which the  
greatest

greatest are enabled to please. In many of the modern tragedies, we find a number of characters which tho' they do not interest the audience so highly as the three or four capital persons of the drama, yet in the course of their parts have a great many very important things committed to them to be delivered, and those such as the audience will not bear to see disfigured and mangled. Some passages there are in those characters which are only introduc'd as the confidants of the Kings and Heroes, and particularly in their recitals of events; this is a business they are generally charg'd with, and is, at least to the generality of an audience, as striking as the most artfully conducted scenes, by means of the succession of the passions they are address'd to, and the pomp of images in the description.

How can an actor succeed without those natural advantages we have been describing, when he is to preserve all the dignity, all the beauty, that the author has given to one of these passages in the character he represents? These interesting recitations make indeed usually but a very small part of the character of the confidant; and it is for this reason that these parts are so difficult to perform, or more properly speaking, are so seldom play'd well: A performer who is supported in his action by a part which is through the whole interesting and pathetick, must be a very bad one indeed, if he does not get applause from it. 'Tis a much greater difficulty to be graceful in the more trivial parts of a character in which there is something eminent: to find that support from the knowledge of the profession, which it is in vain to hope for from the far greater part of the character that it is allotted to appear in, provided

the performer's figure be not absolutely shocking, it is his business to impose upon the audience by a rich and well fancy'd dress. The player must have been favour'd in an extraordinary manner by nature, who can command respect in a plain habit.

The persons whom the several necessities of a theatre throw at a great distance from the shining characters, were much to be pitied, if while they have occasion for so many accomplishments and advantages from nature, they had reason to fear that while they possess'd all we require of them, they shou'd never be in the way of exciting, in any great degree, our attention or regard: Let us undeceive them in this discouraging circumstance, and give a proper encouragement to their merit, by assuring such that our good opinion of them is not proportion'd to the consequence of their parts, but to the manner in which they acquit themselves in them; that real merit will find the way to shew itself as well under the name of *Rossano* as of *Lothario* or *Horatio*; and that when we are examining the merit of a portrait, we are not influenc'd by its being that of a monarch, more than by its being that of a common soldier.

## R E F L E C T I O N II.

*Tho' Persons are happy in the principal Advantages which are required in theatrical Performers, ought they not in general, after a certain Age, to quit the Stage?*

WHAT has been already observed in regard to the figure, may in a great measure be applied also to the age of the theatrical



trical performer. The greater part of an audience may expect to see upon the stage none but such whose face and figure are made to please, to charm the eyes; or such as are in the full bloom of life as to their age. We have abundantly prov'd that the former wou'd be an unreasonable injunction upon the managers of a playhouse; and, on just examination, the other will prove no less so.

In the same manner as we are more diverted with the part of a person in a play who piques himself upon a beauty which he does not possess, as the perfection imaginarily possess'd by the character is in reality less possess'd by the person who performs it; a character in a play, which the author has made very absurdly to affect the charms and prerogatives of youth, ought to please us the more highly, as it is perform'd by an actress who really has so little youth, that she cou'd not affect the having it in private life without being ridiculous.

It is evident therefore that players in certain characters appear to much the greater advantage for being past the age of love and pleasure.

But we ought to admonish the actors, and much more the actresses, not to abuse this principle. When the cool reception they meet with plainly informs them that they can no longer please, let them not obstinately persist in forcing themselves upon us; and what is yet of much more consequence, and of more frequent necessity, let them, before they are oblig'd wholly to quit the profession, have the prudence and the resignation to give up those parts, which tho' they might be-

come them very well while young and sprightly, are now no longer proper for them.

The p'ayers of both sexes, we have said, ought always to remember that on the stage every thing disgusts us, in a very sensible manner, which calls to our remembrance the defects and infirmities of human nature; as we never fail of bringing every reflection of this kind home to our selves. In general when a person is become, thro' age or other infirmities, an object more fit to excite melancholy and compassion, than joy and pleasure, the stage is no longer his proper scene of action, and he ought wisely to retire. It will appear absurd that a person to whose time of life the custom of the world forbids even the satisfaction of enjoying, or at least of frequently being present at public diversions, shou'd arrogate the right of being the perpetual Heroe or Heroine of them. Indeed nothing less than some singular and inimitable excellency, can make us bear with a performer, whose decays in person, voice and features remind us continually of the fate that attends ourselves.

The gratitude and justice of the world have made it a general rule, that those persons who have deserved the greatest applause on the stage in their earlier life, shou'd be received longer on it in their advanced years than others: The world is generous to them in this; and they ought to be equally grateful to the public in remembering that they owe to the applauses and favours they have before received, the continuance of their reception in the same capacity so long as it shall be found agreeable or welcome; or till they see themselves replac'd by other rising players, who

3

are

are able to join those advantages, which themselves now have no longer, to those which they yet retain.

When we find that it is neither with a view to sordid interest, nor out of a foolish self-sufficiency and presumption, that performers continue among a company with whom they us'd to share the utmost praises, we are to regard them as worthy veterans, grown old in our service, and still attempting to administer to our entertainment; we have no right, in this case, to impute to them the injuries of nature; but if we on any occasion take their age into our remembrance, it ought to be only to lament that people, who of all others ought to have enjoy'd a lasting youth, are not exempted from the common laws of nature, but must submit to grow old and feeble as well as other men.

Men may continue the profession of playing to an advanced age much better than women. The reason is evident, that as this more robust sex bears the attacks of age much better than the other, it also presents it to our view in a less afflicting and less disagreeable manner. The *French* stage will long remember the favourites of three ages, *Baron* and *Guerin*, who after seeing every body grow old about them, far from being worn down by the burthen of years themselves, continu'd to merit the applause of the greatest judges, by retaining all that life and spirit, by which they had first obtain'd it, and which the younger people, tho' of considerable merit, found it very difficult to come up to.

We remember *Bowman*, who at a time of life twenty years beyond that at which the generality

rality of players become disagreeable to us, cou'd give such force to the character of *Raymond* in the *Spanish Fryar*, that the house never fail'd to ring with a long applause, when he declar'd to his suppos'd son, his contempt of the statesmen of the times, and told him they were

A council made of such as cou'd not speak,  
And dar'd not if they cou'd—A ministry  
Whence honest men  
Banish'd themselves for shame of being there;  
A government which knowing no true greatness,  
Was scorn'd abroad, and liv'd on tricks at home.

And we never shall forget *Johnson*, who in comedy not only pleas'd, but excell'd to the very last; who at an age more than equal to that of *Bowman*, never appear'd upon the stage, without being the greatest player on it; and who has left us to seek, what we shall perhaps never find, a good *Coupler*, a good *Smugler*, and a good hundred other things, which ceas'd to be any thing with us, when he ceas'd to play them.

The list of Veterans for this age ought not to be clos'd without mentioning the favourite *Leve-ridge*, who, tho' his province was only singing, ought to be remember'd for ever, for pleasing us at least as well as he did our *Fathers* and our *Grandfathers*.

What the audience has a right to demand of those actors who are authoriz'd by the superiority of their talents, to continue upon the stage after a time of life, when it would be decent for others to quit it, is, that they have so much prudence, that while their interest in the company may give them a power of choosing for themselves what parts they please, they take only those, which



which suit with that period of life they are at this time arriv'd at. This is a caution which, (tho' it wants not its weight with respect to the men,) ought chiefly to be regarded by the women. A well made man may possibly be decently gay at threescore, but the wrinkled face of a woman, address'd with all the flattery the poet cou'd bestow on something that he meant to describe as little less beautiful than an angel, is an absurdity too glaring to go down with the meanest spectator.

*Baron*, the most eminent of the two *French* players just mention'd, tho' of the more proper sex for such an attempt, notwithstanding all his merit, was never able to make the audience relish the inclination he had to be playing the parts of young Princes and Heroes at the latter end of his life: The audiences, tho' they lov'd and esteem'd the man extremely, cou'd not have patience at hearing him call'd *Son* and *Child* by people to whom, by his age, he might have been grandfather.



## B O O K II.

*Of the Advantages in which it is requisite that those Players, who play the capital Parts, shou'd be superior to those who perform the subordinate Characters.*

THOSE performers who in comedy have the capital parts assign'd them, and whose polite address and spirited action is expected to enliven and support the representation ; and those who in tragedy are usually employ'd to play the characters of persons worthy of our admiration for their virtues, or of our compassion for their misfortunes ; and we may add those who either in comedy or tragedy have the parts of lovers ; ought to be indowed with a great many natural advantages, besides those necessary to players in general, and which may be dispensed with in those who are employed only in subordinate characters.

The advantages necessary to persons in this higher rank in the theatre are of two kinds. Some are wholly exterior, some entirely interior. The latter of these affect the understandings of the spectators ; the former only strike their senses : The interior ones will make the subject of the first section of this book, the exterior of the second.

S E C-

## SECTION the FIRST.

*Of the interior Qualifications which an Audience requires in the Players, who perform the capital Parts.*

## C H A P. I.

*A gaiety of Temper is absolutely necessary to the Players in Comedy, whose Business it is to make us laugh.*

**I**F we wou'd be determined by consulting the people of the highest taste in dramatic writings, we shou'd be for wholly banishing from comedy those characters of footmen, waiting maids and country ignorants, which at present take up so much of our attention in the generality of the dramatic pieces of this class: And the same taste wou'd also discard a great many other personages of the drama, whom the author has introduc'd to excite our laughter by their pleasantries, or by their ridiculousness.

These delicate judges are for making it a law, that no characters under a certain rank are to be introduc'd upon the stage; they tell us that it is a want of respect to the public to suppose an audience can be entertain'd with people of less importance; and before they will condescend to give their attention to an actor in a new comedy,

comedy, they expect him to produce his credentials in the titles and qualities of the person he represents.

It is not to be deny'd, that good comedies may be written without these subaltern characters; but *Steel, Congreve, Farquhar*, and many more of our own authors, who have succeeded best in this way; and among the *French, Moliere, Reynard, Dancour, &c.* shew us that these characters may be introduc'd into pieces, which are nevertheless allow'd to be excellent comedies: And indeed tho' we highly esteem those writers, who have given into the other method, and confin'd themselves solely to what we peculiarly call genteel comedy; yet we cannot allow they are the only authors who deserve applause in this kind of writing.

Perhaps it is a pretty just observation, that the true end of comedy is to make us laugh; and tho' it may be made to succeed very well in this attempt, when it employs only the higher characters that are allotted to it, yet surely it is no reproach to it to take in these other, tho' somewhat lower ones, provided only that they are natural and decent. It is certainly possible that a scene may give us in every sentence the true delicate genteel comedy, even tho' the characters are not taken from high life; and perhaps it may be said with truth, that there is no such thing as low comedy, except that which discovers a low genius and a creeping spirit in the author.

Let the poet therefore, who knows how to make a man of the common rank speak agreeably to his character and station in life, and at the same time to throw an entertaining spirit into his discourse,



discourse, never hesitate to bring him on the stage before the most polite or delicate audience : But let not the actor, who is naturally of a genteel and serious turn, chuse to exhibit himself in the merriment of a character of this rank. We have before observed, that the actress who wishes to succeed, shou'd always keep her mind in a state of ease, and be ready to take up every passion her part for the night requires her to shine by the feeling of ; and particularly not to suffer the good or ill accidents of her private life to influence her to any peculiar settled turn of mind. The comic actor who wou'd excell and wou'd endeavour to please, is even more subject to this general rule, than those to whom we have originally apply'd it. The desire of applause on their just performing, is almost the only passion that ought to be allow'd to actors in comedy : As to the general turn of their minds, they should be the most joyous people in the world, and have scarce a sense of any thing but pleasure. Above all things the affluence or narrowness of their circumstances ought never to be allow'd to affect their tempers, nor ought they to be influenced by the number of the audience, or the receipt of the house.

A person who acted in the double capacity of player and manager, wou'd be doubly subject to be affected by these chances ; but it is our good fortune, that at one of the houses, the manager is not an actor at all ; and at the other he is such an actor that he is out of the reach of an accident of this kind, as his performing will at any time command a crowded audience.

The

The ordinary players, tho' not immediately concern'd in the profits of the house for any single night, are yet many of them affected by a thin company in a manner that very little favours the hopes of the manager of having better success afterwards.

We are indeed in justice to excuse from any charge of this kind, the persons who might with most reason be touch'd by such a sight, we mean the better actors; but the others, to a man, are insufferable on these occasions. Let us recollect Mr. *Quin*, and his fellow tragedians, in such a situation. 'Tis a provoking circumstance to see a player like him act the part of *Falstaff* to empty benches; yet such is the caprice of the town, that we have had an opportunity of being witnesses to that within these few months, and of seeing at the same time that he was above the reach of such an accident, while he knew the fault was not his own. He play'd on this occasion as well as he had ever done in his life; but the majesty of the great *Worcester*, *Douglass* and *Glendower*, was hurt by it beyond measure, and the whole set of nameless things beside that fill the stage in tragedy, as the guards do at an opera, were so highly enrag'd that the world paid so little respect to their merit as to go to the other house, that not recollecting they were as much oblig'd to the few that were there, as if ten thousand more had join'd them, they skip'd over half their parts; deliver'd the rest with an indolence sufficient to prevent any person's coming again where they play'd; and took snuff, or talk'd of something else in whispers, in the most interesting scenes.

The

The house where Mr. *Quin* is engaged, cannot boast alone the honour of having sometimes empty benches; the *Tempest*, as acted lately at *Drury Lane*, had indeed an audience of *Calibans* in the gallery; but the pit mourn'd its vacant seats, and scarce ten people were to be numbered in the boxes.

We are to observe on this occasion however, that the presence of a master behind the scenes kept the people employed in this murdered comedy, as much in order, as the encouraging attention paid by a full house cou'd have done; and not a drunken sailor but play'd his part at least as well as he ever did in his life, or is ever likely to do.

We wish to see the laugh of an infelt pleasure follow the comedians at every step; and we are never so perfectly pleas'd, as when we can discover that in diverting us, they are heartily entertaining themselves.

'Tis only by thoroughly relishing the comedy in their own breasts that they can ever represent it feelingly to us, or acquire our applause by it. When a man gives us all the wit and drolery of a comic character, without himself sharing in the diversion he affords us, the insipid coldness is easily perceiv'd, and we only look upon him as a mercenary drudge, who has taken up the profession of the player, because he had not industry enough to get his bread by any other.

On the other hand, when the actor can bring himself to share the pleasure with his audience, he is always sure to please: A just relish of the spirit of the character he represents, is the true inspiring God, the real *Apollo* of the comic player; and we shall never find a man who is joyous in  
the



the giving us what makes us so, that is not possess'd of all the fire and genius that characterises the man whom nature has cut out for this sort of life.

Let us not however forget to guard against some faults into which a too free use of this doctrine may lead some of the modern players in this stile, by telling them that it is in general, in their deportment only, not in their smiling faces, that we expect to discover that gaiety and joyous disposition, we wou'd have their parts inspire them with.

The *French* stage affords many instances of people becoming liable to this censure; but the natural gravity of our nation renders it somewhat more rare among us: We are not, indeed, without instances of people who express rather too much of the merriment they intend us in their own faces, particularly at the new theatre: And we would advise these actors, by way of remedy, to attend the places we have in the former part of this work celebrated for the renown'd exploits perform'd in them by Mr. *Machen*. Every holiday furnishes the occasion of a play at one or other of these, and every play almost affords an instance of this precious folly, that ought to put it out of countenance with any body else, in the person of a heroe, who makes a figure there under the name of *Bastock*. This gentleman is humble enough in his private vocation to walk before the chair of a lady at that end of the town; but when he assumes the buskin he grows unmeasurably great, swells to twice his ordinary size, and like the priestess of the *Delphic* God, becomes another creature: But such is the joy of this sudden change of fortune, such  
his



his satisfaction in his own performance, that we have seen a settled smile upon his face thro' the whole part of *Bajazet*.

People of naturally grave countenances, whatever merit they may be possess'd of, are but very badly cut out for comedy; and on the contrary the player who has it in his intention to make us merry, has often the advantage of appearing the more and more comic, as he affects to be more and more serious: It is not more rational to say to the tragic actor, *Shed tears your self if you wou'd draw any from me*, than it is to admonish those in the comic style, by telling them, *if you wou'd have me laugh often, you must very seldom laugh your self*.

The player is never to lose sight of this great point, that his private sentiments and character are to be hid behind those of the character he plays; he must remember that the person he represents, often diverts us with the things that he does or says premeditatedly and of design; and often also by those which drop from him accidentally and without attention: These are frequently the most affecting instances of the whole character, and in these the actor would take off all the effect, if he express'd in his countenance a cunningness and joy at the consequence, which he knew wou'd attend them: The air of inattention with which these sort of pleasantries are conducted, is what gives them all their force; for a laugh upon the face of the actor is sufficient at any time to rob us of the whole beauty of them; and in the other case nothing is more certain than that a thousand pleasantries wholly lose their effect, as well on the stage, as in private conversation, if the person from whom they come does

does not dissemble his intent to raise a laugh, and his hopes to succeed in it.

## C H A P. II.

*No Man who has not naturally an elevated Soul, will ever perform well the Part of a Heroe upon the Stage.*

WE shall not, we hope, be accused of giving the pompous name of *Elevation of Soul* in the title of this chapter, to that ridiculous and idle imagination that is found in certain modern tragedy players, who shall be nameless, who are so infected with the enthusiasm of their profession, that they become princes and heroes for life, by personating such characters on the stage; who can by no means condescend to throw off their grandeur with their buskins, but will carry it in full force to make them the ridicule of the next company they fall into.

These people never receive a visit from a familiar friend, but they persuade themselves they are giving audience; nor mix among the deliberating parties of their company, but they fancy themselves assisting at a council of state. They speak to their domesticks, or if they have none, to the porter or coffee-boy, with all the solemnity of voice with which a Roman general delivers his orders; and if they pay a compliment to an author, who has cast them an advantageous part in his play, they do it with an air that tells him they imagine they are conferring a favour on him by accepting it, or giving him a reward for his merit.

We

We flatter ourselves also that no body will misunderstand us so far as to suppose we mean to give this lofty name to the arrogant opinion some other gentlemen of the same rank have conceived of their own consequence in the world : or to suppose an actor has an elevated soul, because he is mad enough to imagine, that great players are at least as eminent in the eye of reason as great men ; and would tell the world, if he dar'd, that it is almost easier to be a heroe, than to represent one well upon the stage.

The vanity and pride of the former set, tho' abundantly ridiculous, may be useful to them ; and while it renders them contemptible among their familiars, may serve to make them excellent in the eye of the public ; as it will always keep up in them a suitable turn of mind for the executing their parts to advantage. It will doubtless lead them into many disagreeable scrapes among their friends ; but it will in return give them the means of claiming an uncommon share of applause upon the stage ; and by accustoming themselves to play the kings and generals in their family, they will acquire a habit of doing it more naturally in their profession, than any man can, who only takes up his royalty or heroism for the use of the present moment, or while it is requir'd of him in his part. Yet this habitude, however inforc'd, will at the utmost be only sufficient to influence their exterior figure and deportment ; it will indeed throw an air of dignity and greatness into their mien and gestures, but it will never be able to give that noble pride, that elevated grandeur to their expression, which is necessary to the inspiring us with that generous transport with which we love to hear the sentiments of the

F

tragic



tragic poet. It is possible indeed that this settled habit may give a man, who has a good figure and an easy carriage from nature, all that dignity which we find ascribed by a very great writer, with an uncommon warmth, to the late Mr. *Booth* in his ascending his throne in the character of *Pyrrhus*; but it will never give to any man the innate greatness, with which Mr. *Quin* pronounces the sentiments of *Cato*.

The high opinion also which many of our players have of their profession, may not be without its uses to them. This imaginary excellence in it may naturally be the occasion of their loving it more than they otherwise wou'd have done: the player of this turn perhaps may owe the greatest part of his excellence on the stage to this very opinion; and wou'd never have taken half the pains he has done to excell in his profession, if he had thought less nobly of it.

The mind necessarily takes an elevated turn from the exalted idea it forms of the objects it is conversant about; but there is besides this, another far nobler elevation of soul, which the actor in tragedy must shew us he is possess'd of before he can rise to that applause, which some of our present theatrical performers have found the way to deserve.

This consists in a noble enthusiasm, produc'd from a passion for every thing that bears the character of true greatness: This must be native and inherent in the man; and this is what we understand by the term *elevation of soul*. 'Tis this enthusiasm which distinguishes the capital performers in tragedy, from those of a moderate share of merit; and 'tis peculiarly by means of this valuable and rare qualification that such a player



player as we have just now mentioned in *Cato*, creates as it were in the hearts of even the lower class of his audience, sentiments and emotions which they never felt before, nor even had ever suspected themselves to be capable of feeling.

The power of elevating our hearts far above our real selves, is the great prerogative of tragedy; but in many cases the poet alone is not able to do this: We must hear, not read the passages that are calculated to this end; and the great, the excellent performer gives them that eminence upon the stage, which we shou'd never have found in them in the closet. The language in which the poet chooses to convey his most heroic, most ennobling sentiments, is, to a very great part of a common audience, what a piece of music prick'd down upon paper is to a person who has not been taught any thing of that science.

The merit in both cases is indeed all there the poet and the composer have both perfectly done their parts; but, in the one case, till a good singer by his voice, gives the notes their soul and expression, or a good player enforces and explains the sentiment by his expressive elocution; in the other, the harmony, is not known to the one, nor is the sublimity of the sentiment understood by the other.

It will readily be allow'd us, that no author in our language, or perhaps in any other, has arriv'd at that height in the sublime that *Milton* has; and we flatter ourselves that it will also be allow'd that no man ever arriv'd at an equal perfection in speaking the sublime with *Mr. Quin*. There is also this other happy connexion between that great writer and this great player, that their turn of soul seems much the same; their sentiments ap-

pear to be of a like kind ; the very language of *Milton* seems contriv'd on purpose for the voice of Mr. *Quin*, and the voice of Mr. *Quin*, while he is speaking it, seems form'd on purpose for the language of *Milton*. Whoever has heard him read any part of the *Paradise Lost* of that divine author, knows the full force of what we are advancing ; but to those who have not had that pleasure, we may recommend his playing *Comus*. This is a light every body has an opportunity to see him in ; and in this it is easy to observe, that he has all that strength of conception and expression, we have now been celebrating, all that power of enforcing the sentiments of an author which we have described, and of giving meaning to every period, while he addresses it to those who otherwise wou'd have enter'd into none of its beauties.

We have lately had the advantage of a contrast to prove the truth not only of this proposition in general, but of this particular instance of it. We have seen another *Comus*, and have observed a whole audience (the few of a modern audience who are capable themselves of understanding *Milton* only excepted) yawn over the whole part, and shew no sign of pleasure but in the scenery and the bacchanals. What an absolute inattention was there to the speech in which *Comus* discovers his surprise at the lady's voice, as spoke by this weak attempter of the part ! and how strong is the sense, how evident the beauty of every line as Mr. *Quin* delivers the same words ! With how noble a share of the enthusiasm we have been mentioning, with what a seeming heartfelt rapture does he say,

Can

Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould  
 Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?  
 Sure something holy lodges in that breast,  
 And with these raptures moves the vocal air  
 To testify its hidden residence.  
 How sweetly did they float upon the wings  
 Of silence thro' the empty vaulted night,  
 At every fall, smoothing the Raven-Down  
 Of darkness till it smil'd——I oft have heard  
 My mother *Circe* with the *Syrens* three  
 Amidst the flow'r'y kirtled *Naiades*  
 Culling their potent herbs and baleful drugs,  
 Who as they sung wou'd take the prison'd soul  
 And lap it in elysium——*Scylla* wept  
 And chid her barking waves into attention,  
 And fell *Charybdis* murmur'd hoarse applause.  
 Yet these in pleasing slumber lull'd the sense,  
 And in sweet madness rob'd it of itself.  
 But such a sacred and home-felt delight,  
 Such sober certainty of waking bliss,  
 I never heard till now——

Notwithstanding that this speech contains a multitude of beauties of the highest kind, yet they are, to many ears, what prick'd musick is to the eye of an ignorant person; they lie too deep to be tasted in their true dignity by any but those who have study'd the nature of this kind of poetry: But as this player speaks them, the mystery is all thrown off, the veil is cast away, and we are apt to believe even the upper gallery hardly contains a person who does not truly taste some of the most beautiful passages *Milton* has left us.

If it were our business to enter on criticism in this place, we have an ample field for it in the epithet given to the applause of the *Fell Charybdis* in this speech. We have given it as Mr. *Quin* speaks it: *Hoarse Applause*, the printed copies have it, and accordingly others speak it, *Soft Applause*: We have heard many a learned coffee-house dispute, and some more serious ones, on the subject of this passage; but it may perhaps be easy to cut short all arguments about it, by finding a parallel one, and seeing what the same author has done there. If we enter truly into the spirit of *Milton*, there is a line in his description of the testimony death gives of pleasure at the news of his being to be let loose upon the world, in his *Paradise Lost*, which he meant to be of the same kind with this. He seems to have thought it as forc'd a point to make the *Fell Charybdis* applaud the sounds of *Circe* as the *Fell* monster death to smile at any thing: He has in the one of these cases express'd the action by an epithet the most contrary to the nature of the subject that he cou'd possibly have selected, and tells us that death grin'd horrible a *Ghastly* smile; and we are of opinion, he meant to do just the same in the other.

We are apt to believe that the word *Hoarse* in the passage before us was meant in the same light as the epithet here; and till we are convinc'd that *Ghastly* has a natural allusion to the word *smile*, we shall suppose that *Soft* cannot be properly plac'd where the printers of *Comus* have given it.

To return to our subject, we must allow that there is something in the very language of *Milton*, that gives a natural turn to dignity in the speaker;  
but



but in regard to the actor before us; this adventitious help is not necessary to his acquitting himself with the same masterly superiority: To be magnificent in a little part is bombast, not great; but whenever the character he represents will bear him out in it, he never fails of giving us the *Monarch* or the *Demigod* in every speech of it. The language in tragedy the most unlike of all to that of *Milton*, is that of *Ambrose Phillips*. This author has succeeded in that species of writing in a new way, by throwing off all the false ornaments, all the idle pomp of diction, and bringing the speeches of kings and heroes to be more like those of other men. Here, if any where in tragedy, the actor is left to keep up the dignity of speaking himself; but here we find Mr. *Quin* as great as in the most sonorous numbers. Whoever recollects this actor in the character of *Pyr- rhus*, when he receives the embassy of *Orestes*, will own that no man ever look'd or spoke so much like a king as he, when he returns for answer,

The *Greeks* are for my safety more concern'd  
Than I desire—I thought your kings were met  
On more important council—When I heard  
The name of their ambassador, I hop'd  
Some glorious enterprize was taking birth——  
Is *Agamemnon's* son dispatch'd for this?  
And do the *Grecian* chiefs renown'd in war,  
A race of heroes, join in close debate  
To plot an infant's death—What right has *Creece*  
To ask his life? Must I, must I alone,  
Of all her scepter'd warriors be deny'd  
To treat my captive as I please. Know, prince,  
When *Troy* lay smoking on the ground, and each  
Proud victor shar'd the harvest of the war,

*Andromache* and this her son were mine,  
Were mine by lot, and who shall wrest them  
from me?

There is here no pomp of language to support the player, no dignity but what is in the sentiment; yet we hardly see an instance on the stage in which the player is more the *Monarch* than Mr. *Quin* is in this; and 'tis evident that he gives, by his manner of delivering the words, a majesty to the speech, which none but a very judicious reader will find in the closet. If any thing can add to the idea of true greatness, which we conceive of the character of *Pyrrhus* from this speech, it is that noble, that haughty resentment with which this player makes him receive the secret threatening couched under smooth words by the ambassador, of the *Greeks* joining against him in case of a refusal. With what majesty, as well as warmth, two things not easily combin'd, except by this excellent actor, does he answer,

No, let them come, since I was born to wage  
Eternal wars; let them now turn their rage  
On him who conquer'd for them; let them come,  
And in *Epirus* seek another *Troy*.  
'Twas thus they recompens'd my godlike father,  
Thus was *Achilles* thank'd—But, prince, remember  
Their black ingratitude then cost them dear.

Tho' the lower part of an audience have not generally that readiness of apprehension which people accusom'd to the height of poetry have brought themselves to, they have all, however, the seeds of it in them, and wait only to have them warm'd and enliven'd by the actor's  
clo-

eloquence, to bring them to unfold themselves. The player, who, while performing in the character of some great man, perceives himself full of that celestial fire with which he, while living and transacting the things he is representing was also animated, will find no difficulty in diffusing the sacred flame all about him ; his audience will meet it as it breaks from him, and the very meanest soul will find sensibility enough to catch some spark of it. The player thus qualify'd and thus exerting himself, converts the most timid and pusillanimous heart into a bold and noble one, and every individual of his audience, at least for the moment while he is delivering the noble sentiments of his part, becomes a hero. People are in a manner persuaded that themselves only want opportunities to astonish the world with their magnanimity, and that if they were placed in the very situation of the hero whom they see the player personating, they should come up to all the noble heights he arrives at, and perhaps excell him. At every elevated sentiment the poet has thrown into the character, they fancy to themselves that they are only entertained with the noble thoughts of their own hearts. They contemplate in the great man they are admiring, what they firmly believe themselves capable of being ; and admire and reverence in his virtues the imaginary greatness of soul to which they fancy themselves shou'd have aspir'd, if fortune had been favourable enough to them to have given them occasions of exerting it.

We hear much of the amazing power of the ancient orators, and are apt to wonder at the accounts we receive of the additional force which

they gave in speaking to those pieces of theirs which are left us: Something like this enthusiasm we are describing, gave them the energy they are so highly celebrated for; and if we wou'd form a true idea of the effects it had on their auditors, the best method we can take, is to be attentive to a good tragedy, in which a considerable part falls to the share of Mr. *Quin*.

## C H A P. III.

*As all Players have occasion for the great Quality of Sensibility; those in a particular manner who propose to themselves to succeed in drawing Tears from us, have more Necessity than any others, for that peculiar kind of it, which we sometimes express by the Word Tenderness, tho' more strongly by the appropriated Term Feeling.*

**I**T is a maxim as old as the days of *Horace*; if you wou'd have me shed tears, you must weep your self first. That excellent author address'd this doctrine to orators; but it is still more applicable to actors.

Would the tragedian strongly impress the illusion of his performance upon us, he must first impress it as strongly upon himself; he must feel every thing strongly, that he would have his audience feel: In order to his utmost success, it is necessary that he imagine himself to be, nay that he for the time really is the person he represents, and that a happy frenzy persuades him that he is himself in his own person betray'd, persecuted, and exposed to all the unmerited injuries, for which we are to pity him. Nay it is necessary that this voluntary error pass from his  
 imagi-



imagination to his heart, and on many occasions that a pretended distress produce from him real tears: In this case we no longer perceive in him the cold player, who by his studied tones and forc'd gestures, is labouring to interest our hearts in imaginary adventures; he is to us the person he represents, and if some unsurmountable accident does not oppose the effect he ought to produce, he is sure to work all the wonders that can be perform'd by his profession. The players of this masterly kind are the only absolute sovereigns of the world: They command in an irresistible manner the heart, the very soul itself. They are the only enchanters who know how to give feeling to the most lifeless, and naturally insensible beings.

Such as this is the power of sorrow when well express'd: This tender affection of the soul is a kind of epidemic malady, the progress of which among an audience is amazing; it spreads itself every way at once, and infects the most remote spectators with a rapidity scarce to be conceiv'd. Contrary to the nature of all other infections, this propagates itself only by the eyes and ears; but it passes through both these so regularly and so certainly, that it is sufficient if we see a person in real and undeserv'd affliction; nay, if we only hear of it, we are sure, whether we will or not, to join in it.

The utmost effects of the other passions are by no means so contagious: A man gives himself up in our company to all the extravagant emotions of rage and fury; yet we remain in perfect, undisturb'd tranquillity; another is elevated to the clouds with a transport of joy, yet we, tho' present at the whole scene, continue se-

rious and unmov'd; but tears and the signs of distress, even in a person ever so indifferent to us, have almost always the power to affect us, to touch our hearts, and make us sympathize: Born as we are to pain, to sufferings and misfortune, we read with a feeling sorrow our own fate in that of the unhappy wherever we meet them; and the wretchedness of others is a sort of mirror to us, in which we see and cannot but contemplate with bitterness and sorrow the miseries which we know are attach'd to our own condition.

It is not difficult to assign the reason of our finding it thus easy to afflict and mortify ourselves: We shall understand it pretty readily, if we enquire of our hearts what is truly and exactly the nature of that pleasure which we receive from seeing a tragedy perform'd: Our feeling ourselves affected is not always a proof of the superior merit of the piece; we often go thither on purpose to pick up some impressions which we know we ought to have, but cannot find that we really are possess'd of; or to throw off some others which displease, and seem not so agreeable as they ought to be, to the circumstances of our hearts.

What is most of all surprizing is, that there appears to be a sort of joy in the expressing our sorrow; and we often go to such a representation on purpose to indulge a melancholy, and give ourselves an opportunity of shedding tears. Every man may assure himself, from the remembrance of some part or other of his life, that this odd inclination is natural; and many reasons specious enough may be assign'd for it. The difficulty is not to assign some one cause for it, but to determine

mine which of all those that offer themselves to our thoughts is the most general.

When we observ'd that the misfortunes of others, are a sort of mirrors, in which we meditate upon the fate ourselves are destin'd to, we might have establish'd a distinction; which however may be more advantageously plac'd here, and which will serv'e to discover the source of at least one of those pleasures, the origin of which we are to enquire into, on this occasion.

The view of the miseries of others always is painful to us, when those miseries are such as ourselves are equally expos'd to with those whom we see suffering them; but, on the contrary, we find a sort of consolation in looking upon those misfortunes which we see others labouring under, and which we are convinc'd, by reason and the nature of things, can never fall to our own share. The representation in this case gives us pride instead of humility, and a peculiar kind of pleasure instead of the common uneasiness. The source of all our affections on these occasions, is the bringing home to ourselves, what we see represented as the fate of others; and we often receive from this, a sort of comfort in observing, that people in those states of life, which are apt to attract our envy, are at times subject to misfortunes, which our own more humble situation perfectly and securely preserves us from.

We not only are taught by this lesson to bear our private misfortunes with more patience, but we congratulate ourselves on finding that we are, comparatively to the rest of the world, less unhappy than we imagin'd we were.

While the misfortunes of others, however, so long as they are greater than our own, comfort

us with the reflexion that if we are not more happy than we find ourselves, we might have easily been less so; it does not follow that we must necessarily taste the beauties of the piece, in order to our afflicting ourselves upon the occasion of the misfortunes of the principal personages of it, when self-love does not find its account in paying them this tribute.

The heroes whom we see represented as famous for their misfortunes, have been also famous for their uncommon virtues; else they had not been heroes. The more we are affected by their fortune, the more we shew that we understand the rank and value of their virtues; and we flatter our own pride in being adequate judges of such exalted greatness. In other cases, a sensibility and feeling for the distresses of our fellow creatures, when it is conducted by the rules of discretion, is itself a virtue; and we place ourselves in the class of generous and noble souls by bestowing on the illustrious unfortunate, that compassion which is their due.

It is peculiar to the sorrow which we express on occasion of theatrical representations, that we grieve and afflict ourselves the more willingly in favour of those great and virtuous persons, who we know beforehand will not long be the objects of this compassion; when we know that the melancholy we are indulging, will not be of so long a duration as to become troublesome, but that a happy change in their affairs will soon wipe away their misery, and all the tears that flow for it.

Are we at a new play in some degree deceived in this imagination? Does the hero whose fortune we have been compassionating thro' the  
piece



piece at length fall a sacrifice to injustice or barbarity? we set up our selves as judges between him and his enemies. It immediately appears to us, that if our selves had the choice offer'd us, whether we wou'd perish like the heroe, or triumph like the murderers, we shou'd not hesitate a moment to take the suffering part, and we appear great in our own eyes for it.

Perhaps it wou'd be a vain attempt to think of distinguishing which of these several causes most powerfully influence us in the pleasure we evidently take in being melancholy, and in shedding real tears at a tragedy. It is not improbable that they have their several predominancies in different people, and that any one of them becomes the most or the least powerful in its effect, according to the natural turn of mind of the person it has to act upon. But we shall entertain the reader no longer on a disquisition, which is at best rather curious than important; but pass to some other considerations more immediately relative to our subject.

What can be the reason why some players, as is very often found to be the case, are strongly affected, when they hear the author read their parts to them, and yet are very cold and lifeless when they come to speak them themselves? And what can be the reason of another thing that appears yet more strange, that the very same scene which wou'd draw tears from them if perform'd by any body else, shall scarce make any impression on them while they play it themselves?

It should appear that this singularity is to be attributed in general to the inactivity and sluggishness of these players souls, which are in themselves insensible to the finer touches of an affecting

ting sentiment, and can only be mov'd by what pleads to the external senses.

These people are infinitely more struck by the tone of voice, than by the sense that is express'd by it; and are scarce at all affected by the situation of the person who speaks what so strongly affects them. They are not to be roused, in short, into sensibility, except a striking manner of delivery tells them that they ought to be so.

There are other persons in this way of life with whom the odd contrariety we have been speaking of, is to be attributed to quite another origin: Namely, to the natural inclination of their hearts, to a state of freedom and independence; from which principle they are always influenced to perform that much better which is wholly voluntary, than that which they are enjoin'd to do.

Others shew all the coldness and insensibility we are complaining of in their playing, from a much worse reason than either of the former, from their being but very badly acquainted with the sense and meaning of their parts: These have their minds kept in a continual attention to the remembring what they are to say next; and as they are wholly taken up with the remembrance of the words, they can never give themselves up to those emotions, which the part of the character they are representing requires, and by means of which alone, they can please any body that is worth pleasing.

Finally, there is yet another cause for this worst of all faults in playing: we mean the terrors of an audience. This principally affects those of the performers, who have not arrived at the happiness of a general applause. With these the  
fear



‘ I wou’d thou cou’d’st stammer, that thou might’st  
 ‘ pour this conceal’d man out of thy mouth, as  
 ‘ wine comes out of a narrow neck’d bottle, ei-  
 ‘ ther too much at once, or none at all. I pry-  
 ‘ thee take the cork out of thy mouth, that I  
 ‘ may drink thy tidings.’

Every speech after this, convinc’d us more and more, that we had been long in possession of a jewel that we had scandalously neglected; till toward the end of the play, her raillery to her lover, who pretended to be dying for her, shew’d us fully what she was. *Ex eo Corydon, Corydon est tempore nobis.*

With what pleasure is it that one recollects the circumstances that discovered so much merit; that one remembers the manner in which she said,

‘ No, faith, die by attorney; the poor world  
 ‘ is almost six thousand years old, and in all this  
 ‘ time there was not a man died in his own per-  
 ‘ son, *videlicet*, in a love cause: *Troilus* had his  
 ‘ brains dash’d out with a *Grecian* club, yet  
 ‘ he did what he cou’d to die before, and he is  
 ‘ one of the patterns of love. *Leander* was ano-  
 ‘ ther of them; he wou’d have liv’d many a fair  
 ‘ year, tho’ *Hero* had turn’d Nun, if it had not  
 ‘ been for a hot midsummer night; for, good  
 ‘ youth, he went forth to wash himself in the  
 ‘ Hellespont, and being taken with the cramp he  
 ‘ was drown’d; and the foolish chroniclers of  
 ‘ that age found it was for *Hero* of *Sestos*. But  
 ‘ these are all lies; men have dy’d from time  
 ‘ to time, and worms have eaten them; but not  
 ‘ for love.



## C H A P. IV.

*Players who are naturally amorous, are the only ones who shou'd perform the Parts of Lovers upon the Stage.*

A N actress whose personal charms had long render'd her celebrated among a set of performers, where some others might with more justice have claim'd the first applause, had the part of a princess assign'd her in a new piece, whose character was remarkable for a very tender passion to a very faithless man : She perfectly remember'd the words of her part, but she was by no means able to throw into it that tenderness, which the author had meant to characterise the lady by.

There are many reasons why two people of the same sex shou'd not have any very great friendship for one another while on the same stage ; but all these pleaded in vain against the generosity of temper of one of this favourite lady's sister-actresses. She was fond of her, and wish'd nothing so much as to see her merit as a player equal to the applauses which were bestow'd upon her person. She peculiarly wish'd to see her excell in this new part. She gave her many lessons upon the subject ; but they did not produce the intended effect. In fine, the instructress one day in amazement ask'd her scholar, Dear creature, can there be any real difficulty in what I am taking all this pains to set you right in ? throw yourself out of the personated character into real life ; suppose yourself the generous tender woman you act, betray'd in the same base manner : If you were

were to be this moment abandoned by a man whom you tenderly loved, would it not strike you with the most sensible pain? Would not you be endeavouring by every means in the world?— I! reply'd the lady to whom this discourse was directed! I should certainly be endeavouring to get myself another lover as quick as I could. If that be the case, reply'd the other, we are both throwing away our time: I am very well satisfy'd that you will never play this part as you ought to do.

The consequence the friend of our actress drew from this declaration of the state of her heart, was a very just one; the celebrated lady having no other ideas in a love affair than those of interest or vanity, was utterly incapable of expressing any thing of the tenderness and delicacy of that elegant and disinterested passion.

What is the reason that no body ever play'd *Juliet* so well as Mrs. *Cibber*, but that Mrs. *Cibber* has a heart better form'd for tenderness than any other woman who ever attempted it; and perhaps, in real life, more deserves the name of a lover than any body of her sex ever did? It is easy to see that in all that tenderness *Shakespeare* has put into the mouth of this favourite character, this actress is, as she delivers it, glorying in the opportunity of expressing her own sentiments in such elegant language; and 'tis for this reason that no body after her will ever be endur'd on the same stage in that passionate speech, wherein she tells *Romeo* from her window,

Thou know'st the mask of night is on my face,  
Else would a maiden blush bepaint my cheek

For

For that which thou hast heard me speak to  
night :

Fain would I dwell on form, fain, fain deny  
What I have spoke;—but farewell compliment.

Dost thou love me?—I know thou wilt say  
aye,

And I will take thy word : yet if thou swear'st,  
Thou may'st prove false :—at lover's perjuries

They say *Jove* laughs.—O gentle *Romeo*,

If thou dost love, pronounce it faithfully ;

Or if you think I am too quickly won,

I'll frown and be perverse, and say thee nay,

So thou wilt woo ; but else not for the world.

In truth, sweet *Mountague*, I am too fond,  
And therefore thou may'st think my 'haviour light :

But trust me, gentleman, I'll prove more true,  
Than those that have more cunning to be strange.

Or in those eager and animated speeches to him  
afterwards, which indeed, in reading, are very  
pleasing ; but which are not the thing that strike  
us to the heart with a tenderness for the character,  
except when she speaks them, such are,

If thou wilt swear, swear by thy gracious self,  
Who art the god of my idolatry,  
And I'll believe thee.——

O for a falkner's voice,

To lure this Tassel-gentle back again.

Bondage is hoarse, and may not speak aloud,

Else would I tear the cave where *Eccho* lies,

And make her airy tongue more hoarse than mine,

With repetition of my *Romeo's* name.

—If that thy bent of love be honourable,

Thy purpose marriage, send me word to-  
morrow ;

And

And all my fortunes at thy foot I lay,  
And follow thee, my love, throughout the  
world.

Whoever has heard this actress deliver these speeches, knows that there is more fondness, more real love in them, than in all the pompous declarations of it in a *Statira*, when in the transports of an enthusiastic passion, she says of *Alexander*,

He kisses softer than a southern wind,  
Curls like a vine, and touches like a god.

Or in the eager expression of it in *Hermione*, when *Pyrrhus* apologizes for his own inconstancy, by telling her, *the man who ne'er was lov'd can ne'er be false*; with how much spirit and earnestness does Mrs. *Horton* answer to this,

Have I not lov'd you then, perfidious man?  
For you I slighted all the *Grecian* princes;  
Forsook my father's house, conceal'd my wrongs,  
When most provok'd would not return to *Sparta*,  
In hopes that time might fix your wavering heart.  
I lov'd you then, inconstant; and even now,  
Inhuman king, that you pronounce my death,  
My heart still doubts, if I should love or hate you.

But with all the energy that accompanies this speech, there appears something wanting in it; we perceive that *Hermione* is very angry, but we do not distinguish in her that heart-felt passion the poet meant she should discover in every sentence, as the source of that anger: pride, and an indignation of being forsaken for another, seem the reigning passions in the character as this lady repre-



represents it; tho' it is certain they were never intended to be so.

Let us put the merit of Mrs. *Gibber* in this way, in a yet fairer light of comparison. We remember to have seen Mrs. *Ward*, in the character of *Cordelia*, receiv'd with the utmost applause: *Shakespeare* has thrown into the mouth of this lady expressions, as full of love for *Edgar*, as those he has given to *Juliet* for *Romeo*; perhaps the most affecting of those we have just quoted from that character, scarce equal those in which *Cordelia*, after she has discover'd her unhappy lover in his madman's habit, avows her love to him.

Come to my arms, thou dearest, best of men,  
And take the kindest vows that e'er were spoke  
By a protesting maid.

By the dear vital stream that bathes my heart,  
These hallow'd rags of thine, this naked virtue,  
Ridiculous even to the meanest clown,  
'To me are dearer than the richest pomp  
Of purple monarchs.

We all allow Mrs. *Ward* capable of great expression, and even of great tenderness in many cases; but when we hear these passionate declarations from her, we cannot but perceive, that she wants that native tenderness, that peculiar turn to love in the very heart, which gives Mrs. *Gibber* a superiority in all these characters, to whoever did, or perhaps ever will speak them; a superiority which every body has acknowledged, tho' few have known the source of.

We will readily allow (some body will perhaps observe) that people who are themselves in  
love,

love, or who are form'd by nature with a tendency to that passion, are more proper than others to perform tender and amorous parts; but we cannot see why they should be the only ones who are proper for them. To this we shall answer, that if we will be at the pains of enquiring but a little into the history of the stage, we shall find that the highest scenes of love in our best plays have never been so expressively represented as when the actor and actresses were not only of amorous tempers, but were actually at the time of their playing these parts heartily in love with each other. The *Psyche* of *Moliere*, among the *French*, ow'd its prodigious success, at the time when every body seem'd mad after it, to this peculiar accident, that all the love which the audience suppos'd so excellently pretended between the principal characters, was real, and they were speaking their own proper sentiments to one another, under the advantage of that excellent poet's language.

But are we to conclude from this, and a few other such singular instances, (our objector will perhaps continue) that because the parts have succeeded very well where the persons who represented them were in earnest, therefore all actors and actresses must have the same passions in their hearts, at least in general, if not for one another, in order to their playing the same sort of characters with the like success? Must a performer have a natural tenderness of soul, in order to his playing a tender part expressively? We see every day people of good natural dispositions representing tyrants, and persons full of cruelty, on the stage, with general applause; and we have an  
eminent

eminent instance of an actor who is very far from having any thing of the ridiculous turn of the fribbles of the age, in his real character, who yet is able to represent them inimitably to us upon the stage; nor is it necessary for a man to be a savage in his nature, in order to his playing with great justness and expression the *Jew of Venice*. Why therefore (he will conclude) may the case not stand with love, just as it does with the other passions? and why may not an actor or an actress, without being susceptible of all the foibles of that passion, represent very fairly, very faithfully, and very expressively, all its transports?

The man who is capable of arguing in this strain, may be assur'd that he has never been in love himself, and probably has never had an opportunity of seeing two people who were so: when such a man has obtain'd a true notion of love from experience, he will be sensible that whatever may be the case in regard to the other passions, the expression of this peculiar one is not to be had from art. Whatever attempts the best actress in the world, who has it not from nature, can make to catch the genuine address, the affecting air and deportment of the truly enamour'd maid, they will be always as different from nature, as the cold pretences of a common creature whom a man purchases for the night, are from the passionate tenderness of a woman who really loves him.

It is at best but very imperfectly that the player counterfeits the other passions, when he does not really and naturally give himself up to them; but they are all less imperfectly copied by him, from what he sees in others, than love can be.

A man will but very badly imitate the tone of voice of a person in a rage, if his own blood is perfectly cool and calm at the time ; but he may take in other assistances, and borrow from nature some of the other signs by which that passion generally manifests itself ; and nothing is more certain, than that several of the modern actors, in some of their best parts, have this trick of deceiving the eyes of their audience, when they have not merit enough in the character to please their ears. The player in this case saves himself, by addressing his art to one of the senses, when he is sensible he cannot do his business by the other. But this resource is wholly lost in love : when that is the passion to be represented, the player can no more deceive the eyes than he can the other senses of his audience, if nature has not given him a soul form'd to receive the passion.

The truth of this principle may be evinc'd without giving the objector the trouble of much reflection : nay, we shall perhaps be led, whether we will or not, merely by observing facts, to acknowledge, that an actor and an actress who play together a scene where the two characters they represent are desperately in love with one another, can never execute their parts with any degree of perfection, if they do not really feel in their own hearts, at least for that instant, all the tenderness, all the transports for one another, that the persons they represent are endowed with by the poet.

In effect, if it were not necessary in order to the doing justice to such a scene, that the performers mutually feel the sentiments for each other which the poet describes in their several parts, at least for the moment while they are playing them,  
why



why is it that we see an actress appear so very different from herself when she plays such a part, and has the man she really loves for her pretended admirer; and when she plays the same part without this advantage? or why is it that we see the very best of our actors, and those in particular who, under proper circumstances, succeed best of all in love-scenes, yet make nothing of it when the character to whom they are to pay their addresses is given to some female performer, who, from her age or figure, is wholly incapable of charming them?

If it is not sufficiently evident from this, that not only a man must be capable of, and form'd for love, in his private character, but must even be capable of taking it up occasionally, in order to play the part of a lover well, we may yet add a third question, Why is it that a tender love-scene, tho' ever so well apply'd on both sides, is yet perfectly cold and insipid to us, when the person who represents the lover, is a woman in the habit of the other sex? Is it not evidently from the persuasion we are under, that the tenderness that character expresses, is all affected and forced, from the natural impossibility of one woman's feeling for another all that passion which she is to represent to us in the scene?

If we would know the reason, why it is possible for the player to borrow the appearances of the other passions, without being naturally possessed of them; and yet impossible for him, unless he can love himself, to copy, with any degree of success, the transports of that tender affection of the soul, we may venture to propose the following conjecture on the subject.

The other affections of the heart paint themselves no otherwise on the face than by making an alteration in some of its traces ; but love, (and the same may in some measure be said of joy) has the evident privilege of giving new graces, new beauties to the countenance ; and of concealing, or even, for the time, amending its defects. Tho' a player, therefore, is able to represent to us a tolerably perfect image at least, of any other passion, without, in reality, submitting himself to its government ; yet it does not follow, that he can by the same means imitate, even tho' it were but imperfectly, the joyous intoxication of Love, without his being truly affected by it himself.

It would be expecting impossibilities to require, that in every tender scene that is to be represented on the stage, the two persons who perform'd the enamour'd parts should always be, in reality, in love with one another : as to this we only know, that when this is the case, we have the advantage of seeing the scene much better play'd than it can be under any other circumstances ; but we are to wish, in general, that both performers could always take up the passion, for the moment their parts require them ; and that, if it be only assumed for the occasion, it may appear as strongly as possible : they will never make even the lightest impression upon us, if they have not at least a natural inclination for the passion in itself, whatever they may have for the person whom chance has thrown into their way for the present imaginary object of it. It is as impossible for us to make a person, on whom youth, beauty, and accomplishments in woman have no power in real life, to borrow the extasies, the transporting frenzy, and all the gay delights that attend that passion from what he  
fees

fees in others, as to make the dark and melancholy night express the brightness of the finest day.

C H A P. V.

*Which is a corollary to the foregoing Chapter.*

SINCE a natural disposition to love and tenderness is a necessary requisite for playing the character of a lover to advantage, it is very evident that no actor ought to attempt parts of this kind, if he be past that period of his age in which loving would be proper in real life. The remembering our past impressions will never prove sufficient for our expressing them as if present: 'tis in vain, on this occasion, that we call back what we once were in our thoughts, when the warmth and activity of our blood gave the passions a command over us that we now no longer acknowledge. These ideas, when our juices are become cold and frozen, scarce able to creep along their passages, seem but the remembrance of a pleasant dream; and can never awaken in us again those soft transports that were our happiness while they were in their perfection. In order to their producing this effect upon us, it is necessary that the objects of our passion appear to us such as they did at that time; but how is this possible, when we have no longer the same eyes to view them with? It is the unlucky circumstance of human life, on this occasion, that the more we lose the right of being difficult to please, the nicer we become on that head; and as we deserve less, we expect more.

In this situation, what means are there by which an actor and an actress can transform themselves, according to our desires or expectations, or according to the necessity the author has laid them under, into a pair of lovers, who believe that they see in the object of their adoration every thing that nature has created perfect or amiable in the sex. Independently of what the players, in the latter part of their lives, want in the warmth of their hearts and inclinations, beside that they neither see with the same eyes, nor are capable of being affected in the same sensible manner that they would have been while younger, they ought to remember, that they will assuredly be in the same sort of awkward perplexity in performing on the stage the characters of amorous people, that they would be in, if what they are pretending were a reality. They will speak the language of love to a suppos'd mistress so much the more faintly, as they are sensible they should do it were they in real life, and repeating the courtship of their younger days. They cannot but be sensible that they should not in the latter case be able to persuade; and they will never find it possible to take up, in the former, the deportment and tone of voice, and the thousand niceties of sensation and expression, by means of which they might have hoped to succeed in a more proper time of life.

S E C T.



## SECTION the SECOND.

*Of those Qualifications which, when they fall to the Share of that Class of Aëtors spoken of in the Second Book, peculiarly interest the Senses of an Audience.*

## C H A P. I.

*That Sort of Voice which may be very adequate to certain Characters, may be by no means sufficient for the Aëtor, in Parts by which we are to be peculiarly moved and affected.*

WE should not fail to think it an absurd and ridiculous attempt in any man who should bring himself before us on the stage, be it in tragedy or in comedy, without adequate organs for the performance of what we expect from every one who comes there, who should persuade himself, that he could be understood without being heard; and that an audience would patiently open their ears to hear the dumb speak, or sit down to see those scenes, into which they know the author has thrown every ornament that wit, spirit and genius could give them, sink in the representation into the cold stupidity of pantomimes. Provided, however, that the actors in comedy do but take care to express themselves so distinctly, and articulately, that they do not let us lose a syllable of what the author puts into their mouths, we, in many cases, very readily pass over the want of a fine tone, or the elegancies of a good voice.

Perhaps it may be even establish'd as a rule, that it is not to the advantage of the Actor in comedy to have too full and sonorous a voice. The use of this in tragedy, all the world is acquainted with ; but as whatever the voice gains in fullness, it loses in swiftness ; and as to speak quick, yet articulately, is the great merit, in many cases, in comedy ; a swift and manageable voice, ready for every turn of expression, is the most of all to be wish'd for, in the actor who has these parts assign'd him. The persons who would succeed in tragedy, on the contrary, have occasion for a voice that is strong, majestic, and pathetic. Comedy, even when the author means that we should be touch'd by it somewhat in the manner of tragedy, is yet intended to give us but a slight sensation of this kind ; and therefore it requires but little of this assistant energy : We expect, on the other hand, from tragedy, the most strong and violent emotions ; and to produce these, we always require sonorous voices in the principal characters engag'd in scenes where there is room to raise them. It is absolutely necessary, therefore, to the success of tragedy, that the voice of the persons who perform the capital parts in it be proper, at the same time to command the attention, to impress a sort of reverence on the audience, and to raise the greatest emotions in their hearts ; that it be such as can give all the strength and vigour to the vehemence of the passions, that the author could wish in them ; all the noble majesty that he intended in the expression of his most elevated sentiments ; and where an affecting sorrow is to be delivered, that it have all that eloquent energy that is necessary to strike, to seize upon, to penetrate the  
very

very hearts of an audience. It is not enough, on these occasions, that it raise our passions, it must transport and ravish us : it is not enough that it impose, it must subdue and work us entirely to the author's purpose : 'tis not enough that it touch the heart, it must pierce it to the utmost depth.

Where an actress, to whom nature has given but a feeble voice, plays the character of a *Stattira*, or an *Hermione*, we are apt to fancy, that we hear the utmost thunder of a full chorus of an Oratorio play'd upon a dancing-master's kit. What contempt must so unnatural a scene inspire us with ; and, on the other hand, what an impression do we feel from a part of this kind, work'd up by the author's art so as to move the passions of an audience in the utmost degree ; and, to this, play'd by an actress in the bloom of life, and pride of voice and beauty, whose victorious accents might have made it natural in a *Lothario* to become constant, or in an *Altamont* to be unfaithful ?

Those actors who, in comedy, are to represent even people of rank and condition, are not indeed under a necessity of having a majestic voice ; but it is requisite that they have an easy and a graceful one. It is in regard to the voice, just as it is with the figure of persons of quality and consequence, when represented on the stage. There is a sort of voice, by the modulations of which we are able to judge, if we hear a person speak, tho' we do not see him, that he is above the common rank of mankind : this ought to be a distinction always preserv'd to us upon the stage. Unquestionably, in the real world, nature deals with the people of birth and

fashion no better than with those who want these accidental preeminences ; and persons of the greatest quality are no more sure of always having a better voice, than a better figure than other people : but when the poet proposes to himself to represent such persons on the stage, he is to take the best models he can find to form his resemblances from ; and the players are to act in concert with him in this, and to give us copies of such original sonly, as are in every respect the best form'd by nature for the rank they are plac'd in.

The voice of the comedian ought to be noble, when he plays the part of a person of rank and quality ; and it ought to be interesting and affecting, when he performs in character of a lover. The force which a tender sentiment receives from a judicious modulation of voice, or an expressive accent, is more striking than all that it can have from the strongest expression, or the utmost energy. Discourse makes no impression on the heart, otherwise than by means of the understanding ; but there is something in an elegant command of the voice which strikes immediately, and of itself, nor waits for the heart's receiving any notice from the sense of what it delivers. There are some people whose organs of voice are so favour'd by nature in their construction, that they have a secret power of moving our affections, even when we are not able to adapt any determinate idea at all to the sounds that proceed from them ; and we are, in real life, often more affected by the complaints of a person who delivers them in a language wholly unknown to us, than we should have been by any thing he would have been able to say to us,  
if



if he had spoke in a language we were both acquainted with, but with a less perswasive accent.

It is sufficient, in comedy, that the voice of the actor, who plays the part of a lover, be an engaging and an interesting one; but more is requir'd in that of the actress; this ought to be a ravishing, an enchanting one. We expect from her all that perswasive accent, all that engaging tone of voice, by means of which she can do what she will with her audience, and obtain every thing she has a mind to from her admirer. The charms of a fine voice may stand in the place of a great many other advantages: we frequently find the testimonies of our ears carrying us beyond those of our other senses; and many a woman, who has appear'd indifferent to us when we have only seen her, has charm'd us, has commanded our utmost adoration when we have heard her speak.

An elocution of this kind is not, indeed, necessary to those actresses who perform the other parts in comedy; but they must, at least, have a voice that does not shock or hurt the ear. A woman cannot be destitute of any one grace without our being depriv'd, by that means, of at least one kind of pleasure when we see her on the stage; and the more they seem form'd to excite in us only the agreeable, the pleasurable sensations, the less are we able to pardon in them their producing what is contrary to such an expectation. Sweetness of voice is one of the common accomplishments of women; and we are ready to quarrel with nature for having cheated us of our right, when we hear harsh sounds proceed from delicate lips.

## C H A P. II.

*An Audience expects to find in the Person who acts the Part of a Lover, in Comedy, an amiable figure ; and in him who acts the Part of a Hero in Tragedy, a majestic and striking one.*

**T**H E elevated sentiments of a princess may, in some cases, make her overlook the imperfections in the face and figure of the hero who enjoys her love, on occasion of his exalted merit, and superior virtues. According to this principle, while a tragic actor shall appear only in the parts of those lovers or husbands with whose character his age and figure are not incompatible, we have no right to quarrel with him for being ten years less young, or a few inches less tall than the man who acts a *Pyrrhus*, or an *Alexander*.

It is odd that we should be more rigid and severe in this case, in regard to the performers in comedy ; but if we will impartially examine our hearts, we shall find that we evidently are so. As comedy presents us with nothing that is vastly above the common sphere, in the sentiments, or in the actions of the characters it gives us, we are never able to persuade ourselves that the heroes in these plays are form'd for triumphing over the hearts of the ladies they court, without charming their eyes ; nor that the ladies are of such elevated sentiments, as not to consult a little with those organs about the sacrifice which they are going to make of their hearts.

Except, therefore, where the author has meant to figure to us a ridiculous and absurd passion, we  
always

always expect, not only that the figure and person of the lover be not contradictory to the emotions the lady is to feel for him, but that it be elegant enough to justify to us the passion she has conceived for him; which as we are to esteem, not to ridicule, we expect to see well plac'd, and adequate to the merit of the object. It is not enough that the actress describes to us, with all the beauty of expression, the passion she is to be possess'd of in her character: we expect to find that it is probable she should be as much in love with the man as she tells us she is; and that we may have room to praise the playing of the actress, without blaming the bad taste of the lady in her love.

We have already quoted some of the tender expressions in the part of *Juliet*, as play'd by Mrs. *Cibber*, as of the number of the highest beauties of the *English* stage: we are sensible how much the poet owes to the actress on these occasions; and we may add, as to this particular instance, that it is not a small share of the applause that this excellent performer receives in them, that is owing to the graceful person of the player who acts *Romeo*. Let us imagine all the merit in that lady that she has always shewn us in this part; and let us suppose that Mr. *Ray*, or Mr. *Arthur*, with all the merit of Mr. *Barry* in speaking and deportment, were to play the character of her lover: we cannot but allow that the absurdity of a fine young creature, fixing her inclinations in so violent a manner on such very inadequate objects, would rise in judgment with us against all the merit of her tenderness and expression: we should lose the sense of her passion, to laugh at her absurdity, when we heard her  
wishing

wishing for the time of her lover's returning to her, with all the warmth of imagination which *Shakespeare* has thrown into that soliloquy,

Gallop apace, ye firey-footed steeds,  
To Phœbus' mansion—— Such a charioteer  
As Phaeton would whip ye to the west,  
And bring in cloudy night immediately.  
Spread thy close curtain, love-performing night,  
To hood-wink jealous eyes; and Romeo  
Leap to these arms, untalk'd of and unseen.  
Give me my Romeo, and when he shall die,  
Take him and cut him out in little stars,  
And he will make the face of heaven so fine,  
That all the world shall be in love with night,  
And pay no worship to the gaudy sun.

All the spirit and feeling that *Mrs. Cibber* throws into this speech appears natural, when we see so fine a fellow as *Barry* for the object of it; but should we see such a *Romeo* as we have just mention'd, it would shock and distaste, instead of charming us.

We know indeed, when we come to reflect, that players are but the representers of passions, not the people who really are figur'd to us as feeling them; but we want the illusion to be kept up as well as it can be, and we would be taught to forget this circumstance, if possible, till the play is over.

We remember a little *Juliet*, of very considerable merit, at the *Hay-Market*; and nothing is more certain, than that she would have appear'd, even with the same share of genius and accomplishments, much more pleasing than she did, if there had been some gay young fellow for her lover,  
instead



instead of a person whom we could not but remember, at every sentence she deliver'd concerning him, to be too old for her choice, too little handsome to be in love with, and, into the bargain, her father.

To change the scene, let us consider the same advantages and disadvantages in regard to the other sex. What actor in the world can speak his love, his adoration to Mrs. *Hale*, with the same force and feeling that he could to Miss *Belamy*? Or even supposing he could, how very differently would the audience be affected, by the probability join'd with the expression, in the one case, and the unnatural and absurd condition in the other.

Mr. *Ryan* has an uncommon claim to our applause in the part of *Orestes*; but tho' always well receiv'd in it, he seldom commands so much of it as he deserves. The reason is evident: Mrs. *Horton*, tho' an actress of considerable merit in many things, is an unnatural *Hermione*. We see the lover despairing, raging, nay, even mad for this inconstant mistress, whom he pursues against his reason, against every thing, even while he sees her doating on another: what is his motive for this? there appears no other but the beauty of *bright Helen's daughter*? Let him, for heaven's sake then, for the future, have a handsome, a blooming actress to inspire all this in him. If Mrs. *Woffington* were *Hermione*, with all her faults, we should not think it at all unnatural in her lover to tell his friend, who talks of his having determin'd to forget her,

O, I deceiv'd myself.

Do not upbraid th' unhappy man that loves thee,

————When her father,  
 Great *Menelaus*, gave away his daughter,  
 His lovely daughter, to this happy *Pyrrhus*,  
 Th' avenger of his wrongs, thou saw'st my grief,  
 My torture, my despair ; and how I drag'd,  
 From sea to sea, a heavy chain of woes.  
 —When in the midst of my disastrous fate  
 I thought how the divine *Hermione*,  
 Deaf to my vows, regardless of my plaints,  
 Gave up herself, and all her charms to *Pyrrhus*,  
 Thou may'st remember I abhor'd her name,  
 Strove to forget her, and repay her scorn.  
 I made my friends, and even myself believe  
 My soul was freed ! alas, I did not see  
 That all the malice of my heart was love.

What propriety, what justice does there appear in all the strength and energy with which this player delivers this, when there is nothing in the lady to command such an unconquerable passion, when the poet gives us nothing but her beauty for it, and when the managers will not allow us that. We judge it very possible for Mr. *Rich* to find as good an *Andromache* as Mrs. *Woffington* ; and supposing that she had not half the merit that she really has in tragedy in general, and that her voice was ten times less adapted to the fury of this part than it really is, we are confident her figure alone would give a new turn to the whole play, if employ'd in the character of *Hermione*. *Pyrrhus* is a grave man, and may be suppos'd to have forsaken the Grecian princess, for other charms in *Andromache* beside those of a face alone ; but *Orestes* seems to hint at nothing but the beauty of *Hermione* through his whole part : and we are apt to believe that the speech, which, tho'  
spoken

spoken sensibly enough, sits very ill upon him as it is, in the beginning of the second act, would appear with a new face, spoken in the very same tone and accent, if Mrs. *Woffington* stood in the place of the other lady.

Madam, you know my weakness ; 'tis my fate  
To love unpity'd—to desire to see you,  
And still to swear each time shall be the last.  
My passion breaks thro' my repeated oaths,  
And every time I see you I am perjur'd.  
Even now I find my wounds bleed all afresh ;  
I blush to own it, but I know no cure.

I call the gods to witness I have try'd  
Whatever man cou'd do, but try'd in vain,  
To wear you from my mind. Thro' stormy seas  
And savage climes, in a whole year of absence,  
I courted dangers, and I long'd for death.

As would also that, in which, on that cunning  
creature's soothing his passion, in order to make  
him the slave of her faithless purposes, he in a  
moment forgets every insult, every abuse he had  
receiv'd from her, and exclaims in transport,

O joy ! O extasy ! my soul's intranc'd !  
O charming princess ! O transcendent maid !  
My utmost wish—thus, thus let me express  
My boundless thanks ! I never was unhappy !

Unnatural as this appears to us, as the play is  
at present acted, and as it must appear if spoken  
with the eloquence of an angel under the same  
circumstances, we are certain it would have all  
the beauties of just playing, if spoken in the very  
same manner, and the object only chang'd.

We

We flatter ourselves that nobody will be so unjust to us, as to understand that we are aiming invectives against the person of Mrs. *Horton* in this place, or against the talents of the other players, since in the course of this work a strict impartiality is determin'd to be observ'd. We cannot suppose it a fault in this lady, that she is past five and twenty ; nor in Mr. *Usher*, that he is not able to speak the elder brother in *Comus* so well as Mr. *Garrick* would have done it. There are characters enough on the *English* stage, for which every kind of actor and actress is fit. What we are censuring is the conduct of the managers of the houses, who cannot, or who will not see the absurdity of giving such parts to such persons.

It has been with some degree of justice observ'd, on the other hand, on this occasion, that it is the situation and circumstances of the character, and not the person of the actor, wherein we are principally interested in these scenes ; and therefore, that our understandings, and not our eyes, are to be the judges of them : that we frequently see, in real life, the finest women of the age sighing for the most disagreeable fellows that one could, perhaps, pick out of the whole herd of mankind ; and that oddities, or seeming absurdities of this sort, ought not to offend us on the stage, when we find that they are common off it. We need only answer to this, that possibly, on reflection, we might be able to reconcile ourselves to this sort of representation ; but we are to remember that reflection is not our business at a comedy, nor would we have the pleasure we are to receive at these entertaining representations depend on a serious and attentive thought.

If



If when the character to be represented naturally supposes the charms of person in the performer, it is absolutely necessary that the actor should be able to please that part of his audience which have no other means of being affected but by the eyes, as well as those who have ears and understandings. This condition is yet vastly more essential to the actresses who play the parts of those ladies whom the poet has made the objects of love, and represented as worthy to be belov'd and admir'd. It is not only a good face and a regular shape that is necessary for them on these occasions; beauty alone will not answer the purpose: 'tis something that goes infinitely farther than beauty which they ought to be possess'd of; something that exerts its influence more generally and more powerfully over the heart; 'tis that *je-ne-sçais-quoi*, by means of which one woman appears charming, while the want of it renders a thousand others handsome in vain; 'tis that victorious agent, which is as certain always to take place, as never to be describ'd or defin'd.

While we in this manner require, that the performers in comedy have all those elegancies of person that we should expect to find in the happiest lovers in real life, who had nothing but their personal charms to recommend them; we also expect in every performer, who is to appear in a character to which the author has given a title and sentiments above the vulgar, an outside which may not disgrace the qualities within; such a person, indeed, as we should think ought to be connected with such accomplishments.

Tho' nature does not always proportion her endowments, either of mind or person, to the rank and station of life which people are born

to;

to ; and we find often, a very despicable person accompanying a very high title ; we cannot reconcile ourselves to this disproportion of things upon the stage ; we must always have a repugnance to the seeing an actor of a mean figure attempt the character of a person of the first quality.

We should be yet more displeas'd at seeing such a performer enter in the character of some heroic general, or mighty monarch in tragedy ; he would appear to us not to perform his part, but to burlesque or turn it into travestie. We can hardly recollect an impropriety of this kind on our own stage which has any right to stand in competition with one on the *French* theatre, the managers of which have been some years ago so struck with an incident owing to this sort of disproportion between the figure of the actor and the imaginary one of the hero, that they preserve the remembrance of it as an eternal rule for the better adapting such parts for the future. A young performer on that stage, who had all the grand requisites of the mind to the forming a masterly player ; who had sensibility, fire, and an excellent understanding ; but with all these, a figure very ill cut out for the representing a hero, would attempt the character of *Mithridates* : he play'd it in such a manner that his audience would have been all charm'd with him, if they had been all blind ; but unluckily, in spite of all his merit, the disagreeableness of his person prejudic'd the whole house against him ; and, in one of the scenes where a princess who is with him, perceiving some uncommon emotion in his face, tells him, *You change countenance* ; a pleasant fellow cry'd out from among the spectators,  
O!

*O ! let him ! let him by all means !* In a moment all the merit of the actor was lost and bury'd, and the audience thought of nothing, during the remainder of the performance, but of the disproportion between his person and the character he represented.

Every actor in a tragedy ought to have a noble and majestic figure ; the nature of this species of the drama requires, that every thing about it carry the air of grandeur : there are in tragedy, indeed, subordinate characters, but there are no subaltern, no low ones, as in comedy : it admits of humble friends or confidants, but then these are the confidants of princes and of heroes, and share with them the danger and the glory of governing kingdoms, or of forming the schemes of the most heroic actions. It is therefore necessary that the figure of every actor in this way, even of those who have the smallest, the least important parts assign'd them, should agree with the dignity of their characters, not with the length of their speeches, or the importance of the share they chance to bear in the action ; and that they be such men as we may, without absurdity, suppose the persons they represent to have been.

It is absolutely necessary that those who play the capital parts in tragedy should have majestic and striking figures, fit for every noble enterprize the poet for the night may think proper to put into their characters : and it is not only requisite that we see in them that majesty of air and deportment as well as figure, by which superior souls are generally understood to be described to us, but it is also necessary that there be a sedate composure in their countenance, that few but those of very elevated minds ever attain to.

The

The whole business of comedy being to divert and entertain us, it is not wonderful that the very nature of the performance banishes from it every thing that would tend to oppose the pleasure it aims to promote ; and terror being one of the impressions which it is the peculiar privilege of tragedy to excite in us, one might be apt to be surpriz'd that it should require in the persons who are to perform in it a figure which might seem, at first sight, as much as any thing could be, contrary to the nature of such an intent. Two easy reflections will let us into the secret of all this seeming contradiction : tragedy may, on many occasions, represent to us cruel, nay barbarous and savage actions of the persons who make a principal figure in the piece ; but then these are always the effect of some violent transport of rage, not of a temper in the person naturally brutal. We are very willing that the heroes in tragedy should be culpable, but we would always have them be criminal with great excuses, and as it were in spite of themselves : we expect that even in the very act of delivering themselves up to the ill, they should preserve a kind of love and reverence for the good ; and that they be led on artfully to the precipice, not that they plunge themselves voluntarily headlong into it.

The murder of *Desdemona* by *Othello*. is one of the most brutal things done by the hero of a play that we have an instance of ; but with what a judicious care does the author excuse it in this unhappy man, by the thousand circumstances that he contrives to lead to it, and how nicely has he distinguished between the savage fury of a bravo, and the just resentment of an unoffending, injur'd husband, by making him in love with her even at the mo-

ment



ment that he is about to destroy her. Whoever will *look into* the following passages with this view, will find great reason to be satisfy'd with the conduct of this scene of revenge, savage and brutish as it is in the period; I say, whoever will *look into them in his closet* will find this; for the judgment of the people who prepare and cut plays for the actors is not quite enough to lead them to comprehend the necessity of some of those things which assist in the palliating the circumstances in this manner, so that we do not hear them on the stage.

When *Iago* has by his cunning rais'd the jealousy of the heroë to that pitch that he seems certain of his wife's crime, his resentment bursts out not against her, but the suppos'd villain who had wrong'd him with her,

I would have him nine years a killing,

we expect some horrible threat next against the lady, but he melts into tenderness, and only says,

A fine woman! a fair woman! a sweet woman!

and 'tis with difficulty that *Iago*, who answers, *Nay, you must forget that*, is able to conjure up any other thoughts in him. This is one of those soothing passages which shew how much against the nature of the heroë is the crime he is afterwards to commit; and it is one of the many of the same kind struck out by the *prompters* from his part.

Immediately after this, when he exclaims in the violence of his rage,

Aye,

Aye, let them rot and perish.—Let her be  
damn'd to night ;  
She shall not live ;—my heart is turn'd to stone.

he immediately melts again, and adds,

—Oh ! the world has not a sweeter creature ;  
She might lie by an emperor's side, and command  
him tasks :

Oh ! she will sing the savageness out of a bear,—  
And then of so gentle a condition.—The pity  
of it, *Iago*,

O ! the pity of it !—

The poet gloriously contrives to make even the  
natural temper of his hero assist in the taking off  
from the brutality of the action he is to be guilty of.

What can we expect of a worthy man, convinc'd of his lov'd wife's pretended adultery, but death as the punishment ?

When we hear the impetuosity of rage burst forth against the supposed adulterer,

O that the slave had forty thousand lives ;  
One is too poor, too weak for my revenge.

what are we to expect but the vows of vengeance against the other criminal, as we find them follow,

Now do I see it's true ; look here, *Iago*,  
All my fond love thus do I blow to heaven.  
Arise, black vengeance, from the hollow hell !  
Yield up, oh love, thy crown, and hearted throne  
To tyrannous hate ! swell, bosom, with the fraught,  
For 'tis of aspicks' tongues.—O ! blood, blood,  
blood !

When

When the subtle accuser of the lady works the deluded man up to a resolution of never stopping till he has done the suppos'd justice he intends, by hinting to him that *his mind may change*, how nobly is the character kept up by the answer,

Never, *Iago*. Like to the *Pontick* sea,  
Whose icy current and compulsive force,  
Ne'er feels retiring ebb, but keeps due on,  
To the *Propontick* and the *Hellepont* :  
Even so my bloody thoughts with violent pace  
Shall ne'er look back, ne'er ebb to humble love,  
'Till that a capable and wide revenge  
Swallow them up.

How natural, nay, how excusable does all this fury appear, under the circumstances in which the author has represented it ; and how artful is his conduct in binding him immediately after by a solemn vow to do what must be done, tho' it was so very improper for the character of a hero to perform it. We see *Shakespear* in this noble instance throwing the cruelty of the action that was to be committed, upon the provok'd and artfully-raised vengeance of the husband ; and this so judiciously, that we could scarce have accused him of sinking into brutality, had *Desdemona* fallen by his hand at that instant : But this was not enough for *Shakespear* ; how gloriously has he reconciled us to the hero's acting it, by making him even tender and affectionate in the instant he is about to do it, representing it to himself as an act of justice, not a brutal revenge,

She must die, else she'll betray more men.  
Put out the light, and then——

H

Put

Put out *the* light!—if I quench thee, thou flaming minister,

I can again thy former light restore,  
Should I repent me:—but once put out *thy* light,  
Thou cunning'st pattern of excelling nature,  
I know not where is that *Promethean* heat  
That can thy light relumine.

When I have pluck'd the rose  
I cannot give it vital growth again,  
It needs must wither: I'll smell it on the  
tree;

O balmy breath, that dost almost persuade  
Justice to break her sword.  
Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee  
And love thee after.

I must weep,—but they are cruel tears;  
This sorrow's heavenly,—it strikes where it does  
love.

Whatever horror and brutality there may be in the act itself of killing an innocent wife, the author has here perfectly reconciled it to the character of a hero, by his conduct of the circumstances that occasion it, and that lead to it. It is evidently against the inclination of his heart that *Othello* does it; and even while we see him about it, we do not know whether he or *Desdemona* be most to be pitied.

We have dwelt the longer on this instance, as singly sufficient to give rules to all future writers in this critical circumstance; and we shall add, that this sort of conduct is necessary in the player as well as in the author, that where the one omits it in his looks, the other has in vain put it into his words, and that where the author has been too negligent in his preparations



tions for, and alleviations of it, it is in the power of such an actor as the man we most admire in this part, to be of infinite assistance to him in supplying all by the help of his deportment. All this however is not enough for our satisfaction on this subject; we are never content with heroes, unless we can fancy to ourselves that we read it in their faces that they were born to see all their desires, all their inclinations satisfy'd; and unless the right which we persuade ourselves, from their appearance, they have to be happy, excuses them in the attempting to triumph over every obstacle to their success, whatever means it may be necessary to use in accomplishing it.

## C H A P. III.

*Of the real or apparent conformity there ought to be between the age of the actor, and that of the person represented.*

A Portrait, tho' ever so valuable for the correctness of the design and the strength and beauty of the colouring, will always be censur'd, and that with reason, if it represents the person it is done for as older than he really is; and in the same manner the player, tho' a perfect master of his profession, will in many cases only give us a half pleasure if he appears too old for the character he assumes for the night, even tho' he represents it ever so accurately. It is not sufficient that the managers of a play-house do not give us a wrinkled *Eudofia* or a *Varanes* with grey hairs, we expect that they should represent those characters to us with all the advantages of youth and beauty.

This observation is not however of universal force: the actor who has many years more upon his head than the author has chosen to bestow upon the character he represents, may under some circumstances give us even more pleasure than if he were exactly at the same period of life: this is most happily done in comedy by means of that address which we have seen in some of our modern players (at the same time that they play with great elegance, force, and justice) of sinking the disparity between their age and that of the character, and giving us the pleasure of what we are sensible is a double elusion. There is scarce a greater merit in a player than this masterly artifice well apply'd; but when any imperfection appears in it, when the countenance of the performer does not throughout keep date, instead of his own time of life, with that of the character he acts, we feel no pleasure in the representation, and the best playing is thrown away upon us. The English stage has shewn us players who many years before we have had occasion to quarrel with them for remaining upon it, have shock'd our fathers with playing the parts of young princes, and beardless lovers.

Tho' we in general are more willing that men should continue on the stage after the bloom of life than that women should, yet we have met with instances even of persons of the tenderer sex who have had the art of borrowing the graces of their earlier years, even when they grew towards old women, nay and that much beyond what the men have ever been able to do. We have seen an actress of fifty, who, whenever she pleas'd, was to all appearance barely sixteen. The men have but very seldom been known to  
have

have this advantage ; and among the women 'tis indeed the peculiar happiness of a few only, whom nature has been more than ordinarily kind to.

It is allow'd that there are some women who have this peculiar advantage ; but to make the accident useful to us, we must enquire how an actress who is approaching toward the time of life when she will want it, is to know whether she is possess'd of it or not ; she is not to trust to her own eyes about it, they will be partial to her : every actress, if this were allow'd to be the test, would claim the privilege ; 'tis the eyes of the audience that she is to resolve this question by. This is a glass that will never deceive her ; upon a fair and impartial examination in this, she will timely see that the flower of her youth is faded, and that those charms which us'd to make every thing she said or did please, are gone : this is a melancholy truth, but 'tis a useful one ; and if she has the mortification from hence to find that she is no more young, she will be taught by it, however, to escape the making herself ridiculous, by attempting to appear so when it is no longer possible she should succeed.

#### C H A P. IV.

*Of the Characters of Footmen and Chambermaids on the Stage.*

**I**N order to succeed in some of the subordinate parts in comedy, it is not necessary that the actresses be in the prime of life, or bloom of youth and beauty ; in many it is even essential that she

be past her prime, while in others it is indeed equally necessary either that she be very young, or that she appear to be so: the last of these is the more proper, where the author has thrown into the mouths of these characters conversations too bold and familiar, or carrying too little respect to the persons in whose service they are, or where the imprudent advice they give to the young ladies they attend can have no excuse, but that it comes from a rash, unthinking, and giddy creature.

A real girlishness in the adviser, in this case, is a necessary qualification for the rendering the scene natural: on the other hand, where the waiting gentlewoman, in order to favour the lovers, takes certain steps herself which are not quite reconcileable to the strict rules of modesty, a pretended youth will be more proper for her purpose than a real one; the less the actress has of the real girl in her countenance, the more the indecent liberties she suffers will entertain the audience.

It is allow'd then that a chambermaid is not always expected to have an air of youth and bloom; but there is another indispensable quality which she must never be without, that is, an extreme volubility of tongue; if any actress attempts these characters without this advantage, she will lose herself with every judicious person of the audience, and will never be able to give the true grace and spirit to her part.

There is another requisite as necessary to the chambermaid as this volubility of tongue; this is an arch and cunning look, with a world of discernment, and occasional secrecy in it; when an audience observes in a waiting gentlewoman a simple and unmeaning face, or an openness and



and ingenuous serenity in her countenance, they expect to find in her character the simplicity of a *Feible*, not the address and cunning of a *Kitty Pry*, or an intriguing chambermaid.

As necessary as a cunning look and a ready volubility of tongue are to the chambermaid, so essential are a cringing humility, an attentive observance, and an agility of body, to the footman. The best judges of comedy tell us, that in every scene of it every person should be in motion; they speak this only figuratively of the genteeler characters, but it is literally true of footmen; when they have a part in the scenes, it is essential to their characters that they find means to employ our eyes as well as our understandings continually about them. It will naturally follow from this principle, that the persons who perform these characters ought to be of such a figure as is fitted for running and skipping about; and a clumsy figure in the character of a footman, must be as absurd as a fluttering voice in a chattering chambermaid.

The English stage is perhaps at this time as happy in characters of this kind as any theatre ever was; there is not a requisite on the female part that is not found in its utmost perfection in *Mrs. Green*; nor in the other, but is as eminent in *Mr. Woodward*.

We do not forget that *Mrs. Clive* has succeeded to admiration in a great number of parts of this kind, and that even *Mrs. Woffington* has made a very pretty *Phyllis*; but the nicer observers will find too much self-sufficiency and an unnatural freedom with her betters, in the former of these ladies in such characters; and an easy indolence and polite deportment in the latter, which, as

neither of them will ever be able to shake off, will always be great obstacles to their merit in these parts, and the want of which will always set *Mrs. Green* above them both, tho' her real excellence in them were much less than that of either.

We are to allow no little merit in the footmens characters to *Mr. Yates*; he has long pleas'd us in them, and long may do so; a requisite assurance is not wanting in either this player nor his rival in these characters; perhaps it would be a point not easily determined which of them has the most of it; but the greater fund of understanding that seems to be in *Mr. Woodward*, and his figure, so much better proportioned to that necessary agility we have mentioned, will always, we imagine, give him a superiority.

*The End of the* FIRST PART.



THE



T H E  
A C T O R.

P A R T the SECOND.

*Of those Assistances which Players ought to  
receive from Art.*

**I**T will evidently appear from the observations deliver'd in the first part of this treatise, that there are but few persons who are proper to appear on the stage ; and that even out of these, it is a yet much smaller number who are calculated for performing the principal characters. This is a truth which the greater part of those persons who determine to make the stage their profession scarce ever trouble themselves with reflecting on. Many of those who determine on this way of life, ought no more to conceive it possible that they can entertain us in it, than a fat fellow wheezing at every step with an asthma, that he could win the prize in a foot-race ; yet they offer themselves blindly and boldly to the managers, and they find managers who as blindly and as boldly receive them.

Not only many of these people push themselves upon the stage, without having any one of the necessary dispositions for succeeding in it; but often those who really have the proper requisites, employ the least of their care in shewing them, or in distinguishing themselves by the only things which ought to command our notice. They are thrust forward in some part, not that is fit for them, but that it pleases their fancy; they are supported by a body of friends for their first appearances: they find they have an applause that night, and are not hiss'd the next; and then take it for granted they have done every thing necessary to their own honour and our satisfaction.

We are not to flatter ourselves so far as to suppose that we can persuade those people who attempt the stage without being form'd by nature for it, to quit it: Nor are we even to suppose that it will be in our power to prevent a multitude of others of the same stamp, encourag'd by the success of people like themselves, from entering upon it with the same impossibility of succeeding.

We are not to imagine that we ever can improve our theatrical entertainments by inspiring a set of wretches whom we see at present upon the stage, with so noble a passion as a just emulation, while they play for no other end but interest. One might indeed wish better of these people, because they are too numerous among our present players; but what have we to hope for from them, when we see that they have no more love for their profession, than respect for their audience; but come upon the stage to deliver out their parts, as if they were



were easing themselves of a burthen which they were hir'd for carrying, and in pain till they were rid of.

In endeavouring to prove the necessity there is, that the players in comedy as well as tragedy, shou'd have received many peculiar accomplishments from nature; we have not been vain enough to imagine that we shou'd persuade people who are not thus form'd for the stage, to keep off it: We only propos'd to ourselves to disabuse those who have establish'd it as a rule that all that is necessary to the making an actor, is, that the man have a memory, and the power of speaking, walking, and tossing his arms about.

In endeavouring to prove how diligently the player ought to study in order to arrive at perfection in his business; we have not flatter'd ourselves so far as to suppose we cou'd conquer the idleness of those performers, who every day give us instances enough of their being enemies to industry. We have only meant by this to open the eyes of those beginners in this way of life, who from the seeming ease with which the best players obtain applause, are apt to persuade themselves, that a very little trouble will serve to prepare them for playing both tragedy and comedy. We shall endeavour to shew in the sequel, to those who wish, and have some grounds to hope, that they may in time arrive at the art of playing the one or the other with success, what are the talents, and what the means by which they may command our applause.

## C H A P. I.

*In what the Truth of a Representation on the Stage consists.*

**A**LL dramatic fictions please us the more, the more like they are to real adventures and occurrences. The perfection which we are most of all desirous of seeing arriv'd at in the representation of these pieces, is what the judges of theatrical performances express by the word *Truth.*

They mean, by that term, the concurrence of all those appearances which may assist in deceiving the audience into an imagination, that 'tis a scene of real life they are attending to.

These appearances are naturally divided into two classes. The play of the performer furnishes those of the one kind; the others are foreign to his acting; and we owe them to the disguise we see him under, or to the decorations of the place where he plays.

The appearances of the first kind; that is, those which arise from the theatrical action of the performer, are of all others the most important to the illusion; and these the nature of our subject leads us more immediately to the examination of. They in general consist in the nice and perfect observation of every circumstance of the character, and every thing requisite to it. The performance of an actor, in whatever scene or character, is only true, when we perceive in him every thing that agrees with the age, condition, and situation of the person he represents.

represents. Does a player enter upon the stage in the part of *Sciolto* in the *Fair Penitent*? We shall never allow him to represent the character, even to the eye, if we do not see in him the wrinkles of age, and the whole carriage of a man old enough to be the father of the persons he converses with. *Sciolto* is a man of great rank and quality; the actor will therefore never be what we expect in the character, if he does not join to the gravity of the old man the deportment and air of nobility in every part: He is rejoiced at the supposed happiness of his family in the beginning of the play, and carries a mixture of an unconquerable grief and resentment, at the behaviour of his daughter in the latter part of it: The image which the player gives of him, is therefore not at all just, if we have not, in the first part, all the transport of a fond and indulgent parent express'd, and in the latter, all the rage and vengeance of a man of honour wounded in the tenderest point, and seeking the means of vengeance, tho' at the expence of life itself.

The actor who is to express to us a peculiar passion and its effects, if he wou'd play his character with *Truth*, is not only to assume the emotions which that passion wou'd produce in the generality of mankind; but he is to give it that peculiar form under which it wou'd appear, when exerting itself in the breast of such a person as he is giving us the portrait of. The rage of *Bajazet* is very different from that of Mr. Alderman *Fondlewife*, tho' both are rais'd from suspicions of the very same kind: And the grief of *Statira* when the conqueror of the world proves false to her, is very different from that of *Phyllis* when she has lost her *Damon*.

The

The expression of the actor is also to be varied, as well as his deportment, according to the character he represents. Love in a young man ought to burst forth in transports and impetuosity; in an old fellow it is to shew itself by degrees, and with a deal of art and circumspection.

A person of a superior quality, throws into his very sorrow, into his complaints, and into his threats a sort of decent greatness, and has ever less violence, even in his anger, than a person who has had no education. The affliction conceived for the loss of a sum of money, paints itself in very different colours in the face of an old miser, and in that of a young extravagant; and the coxcomb does not blush at a reproof in the same manner as the man of merit and modesty.

The truth of expression in the player depends, upon the whole, on the truth of the action, and on that of the recitation.

## C H A P. II.

### *On the Truth of Action on the Stage.*

**T**O exhibit *True Action* in a part, is to do every thing allotted by the author to the character represented, in a manner exactly conformable to what the person himself wou'd or ought to have done it in, under every circumstance and in every situation thro' which the action of the play successively carries him.

Every scene produces some change in the circumstances of the character, and every change of this kind demands a multitude of other variations in the actor in conformity to it. Many occurrences



occurrences dictate of themselves to the actor what he is to do, and in what manner he is to behave under them. A lady is, for instance, introduced on the stage, endeavouring to sooth the pains of a forc'd absence from her lover, by drawing his picture from her memory. The lover bribes her maid, and is introduc'd into her chamber, where, without being discovered, he can see how she employs the hours of his imaginary absence. It is evident in this case, that he is to place himself in such a manner that he may contemplate the picture, as it rises from her touches, without being discovered by her; that from time to time, his curiosity tempting him to nearer and nearer views, he is to throw himself into the danger of being seen; that at every motion she makes, he is to express a terror lest he should be observ'd; and that, eager to prolong the ravishing contemplation, he is to recover with a precipitate haste, but at the same time with a visible affliction in his countenance, that part of the stage where he is out of her sight.

There are other circumstances as interesting as this, which yet do not point out so clearly to the player, the action that should attend them, and we frequently have opportunities of seeing, that there are some in which it is too easy for him to take an exactly contrary part to nature, to reality, and to the intention of the poet. We shall spare the censure of our own performers, and give an instance of this in a well known *French* tragedy, that of *Iphigenia*. When *Agamemnon* is ask'd by that unhappy princess, if she may be permitted to assist at the sacrifice he is preparing, he answers, *You shall be there, my child!* Many actors have imagin'd that it was their business

finest to add a great deal of the pathetic to this short answer, by fixing their eyes with the utmost affection, grief, and tenderness on the lady, while they deliver'd it. But this, however proper it may appear at first sight, is, when strictly consider'd, absolutely contrary to nature, and reality ; for doubtless *Agamemnon*, who knew he was going to sacrifice that very daughter, who had so little imagination of it, that she was asking it as a favour that she might be present, and who did not intend she shou'd know his cruel purpose till it cou'd be no longer conceal'd, ought to turn his eyes away, while he gives this answer to her innocent question, that she might not perceive his grief and agony while he spoke to her.

In the *Penelope*, another favourite play of that nation, *Ulysses*, after having been a long time expos'd to the vengeance of *Neptune* and *Venus*, and after having suffer'd innumerable hardships, returns to his country. Charm'd with the behaviour of his son, he discovers himself to him ; and the faithful *Eumæus* is present at this scene. At first thought one wou'd be apt to imagine, that the business of the player who represents *Telemachus*, shou'd be to throw himself immediately at the feet of his father, and give himself up to all those transports of joy natural to a son, who, after seeking his parent thro' the world in vain, had now met him unexpectedly. But, on farther considering the circumstances, we shall change our opinion. *Ulysses* had been absent so many years, that his son, a child at the time he left him, cou'd have no remembrance of his person ; he ought therefore to expect a confirmation of the truth of what was told him by a stranger, before he gave way  
to

to those emotions, which would naturally and necessarily arise if he was rightly inform'd. The action of the player, who performs the character of *Telemachus*, will therefore be *true*, if he expresses only a mixture of astonishment and respect at what his father says, and puts on an air of indetermination, during the moment that interposes before a person whose fidelity he is perfectly convinc'd of, assures him, that he sees his father and his king.

These and many other examples of a like kind, abundantly prove how very different the true action requir'd in a great character under particular circumstances, may be from that which may first present itself to the imagination of the player.

It is plain also from the last instance, that he is not to suppose it sufficient in all cases to study the truth of the action, with which he is to accompany the words the author has put into his mouth; in many circumstances the silence of a player, may be as eloquent as the finest form of words cou'd be; nay, there is often more beauty, as well as more difficulty, in the being properly silent, than in the delivering the most sounding line a poet can put into the part of the highest character.

It is not long since, to borrow one more instance from our neighbours, that a *French* actress immortaliz'd her reputation in the character of *Penelope*, in the play we have just mentioned; and we may assure the world that a judicious and well-conducted silence, had no little share in the acquiring her those applauses she receiv'd in it. The discovery of her husband who had been so long absent, had never struck the spectators in that amazing manner, had there  
been

been no merit in her share of the scene, beside the repeating the words of her part. What charm'd every body, was the deportment of the actress, the insensible gradations by which she turn'd herself toward the pretended stranger, as she more and more assur'd herself, that the voice of the person who spoke to her, was that of the husband she had so long lamented ; this had infinitely more effect than any thing she said, or cou'd have said on the occasion.

The difficulty of observing every circumstance on which the truth of action depends, is greatest of all in those peculiar situations of the character, under which the performer is obliged to play as it were two parts at the same time.

We have an instance of this kind in a scene in the *Old Batchelor*, in which the dotard, his wife, and the gallant, under the disguise of Mr. *Spintext*, are on the stage together.

The lady has here the jealousy of a husband to deceive, and the ardour of a favourite lover to return at the same time. She embraces the gallant by a pretended mistake instead of the husband ; she cajoles the dotard with fond expressions, while she makes signs over his head to the lover, and addresses her discourse to the one while she pretends to speak to the other. The actress who wou'd succeed in this character, ought to be extremely upon her guard, that the audience may not find her either too little upon the watch as to her husband's jealousy, or wanting in that tenderness which she ought to shew to her lover.

These sort of incidents are abundantly difficult to perform to satisfaction ; but there are yet some others in which there requires still more address  
and



and management. There are those in which the performer, has three instead of two parts to play at the same time ; where there are two people to be deceived by two different stories at the same instant, and the performer is all the while to express also to the audience a sense of the difficulty of what is doing, and a continual dread of being discovered by one or other of the persons deceived. We have an eminent instance of this kind in one of our farces, where an intriguing maid-servant finds it necessary for the good of her young master to delude his father, and the aunt of the lady he courts, into an opinion of one another, as persons out of their senses. While the actress is here construing every look and gesture of Mr. *Goodall* into madness to Mrs. *Higmore*, and every glance and accent of that lady into frenzy to him ; she is expressing to the audience all the while the utmost terror in the world, lest one or the other of them shou'd discover her : Nay, she even adds to the necessary perplexity of the part she has to act, by blending with her very terror the pert self-sufficiency, that marks out the rest of her character ; and gives us one of the strongest modern examples it is possible to quote, of the application of the rule deliver'd in the last chapter, that the same passions are to be express'd very differently, as acting upon different characters. The person who understands this merit in Mrs. *Clive*'s playing this short character, will not wonder if it appear very insipid when perform'd by any body else.

There is no conceiving, but by an attentive examination, into the peculiar merits of the performer, how much many of those characters  
whichs

which we are apt to admire the author for drawing, owe to the manner in which they are represented: And on the other hand, the plays of *Moliere* in *France*, and those of *Beaumont* and *Fletcher* with us, abound in characters which are scarce ever play'd with justice. We are not therefore to wonder that these do not always bring full houses, and of consequence, that they are seldom perform'd. The managers may depend on it, they wou'd see no empty benches on the nights such pieces were play'd, if they wou'd employ as many of their principal performers in them as are necessary; and allot the characters of consequence to such persons as are able to give them all the force and expression they require. They tell us they don't play these, because the town is more fond of novelty: Let them do what we are recommending to them, and they will give us one of the greatest and most acceptable kinds of novelty in their power.

## C H A P. III.

*Observations on the two principal Things essential to the Truth of Action.*

AS action and recitation compose the essence of what we call expression in the player; so the judicious changes in the countenance, and those in the attitude and gesture form the truth of action. That the changes of the actor's countenance may appear just, and sufficiently expressive to an audience, it is not enough that the passion which he is to describe to them barely discover itself in his eyes; it must be seen there with an uncommon force and vivacity. The face

face that can mark a passion but weakly on the stage, is to be rank'd with those which cannot mark it at all: That very degree of expression in the countenance, which is capable of affecting us elsewhere, is not enough to affect us in the player.

The paintings expos'd upon the stage, are seen at a certain distance by the greater number of the audience: they must therefore have a strength in the touches somewhat too bold for a near view; but yet so moderated, that it may be overlook'd by those who have that situation, in consideration of the necessities of the rest.

The passions must all shew themselves with life and spirit in the countenance of the player; yet they are not to distort or disfigure it. It is the misfortune of one of the best actresses of the present or perhaps of any age, that a too great sensibility in scenes of distress throws her features out of all form, and excites our distaste instead of our compassion; and 'tis the peculiar advantage of another of the modern favourites of that sex, to acquire a beauty in the height of sorrow, which she wants at other times. We cannot but regret the fortune of one of these ladies, as much as we admire that of the other; but we are not to expect that we shall find in others so singular a charm in a face of sorrow, as we discover in the latter of them. It is not the good fortune of every tragedy princess to have a face that misery fits well upon; much less to have such an one as we adore in the heroine of another house, for charming us equally under all the disguises the poet for the night chooses to shew it in. We have at least a right, however, to expect that anger is not represented to us by convulsions,

sions, and that sorrow and distress are not made shocking, when the poet intended they should be interesting and affecting.

Whatever exceptions may be made in regard to the justly celebrated actress hinted at above, it is certain that in general the players only fall into these excesses, from their not being affected in such a degree as the circumstance and situation of their characters require. Does the player feel sensibly and strongly the passion he is to express to us? It will then paint itself in his eyes, without his distorting them to make it do so. But is he oblig'd to teize and torture his soul, to rouse it out of the stupid and lethargic state he finds it in? The constrain'd state of his mind, will shew itself in all his action, his very features, as well as his gestures and motions, will discover it, and he will appear rather a sick man harass'd with a fit of some strange malady, than a player affected by a common passion, and endeavouring only to express it.

It sometimes happens that the countenance of a performer, is only fitted by nature for the expression of some one peculiar passion or affection of the soul. There are countenances naturally dismal which seem form'd only to shed tears, and to draw them from other people; and there are others which seem calculated only for mirth and jollity; to be joyous themselves and to make every body else so. In the first, gaiety never sits easy; they never laugh but with constraint; and they tell you too evidently that they are merry only because they are bid to be so. Sorrow sits upon the face of the others in the same unnatural and forc'd manner; one wou'd take it for a stranger endeavouring by force to settle  
itself



itself in a country where every native is an enemy. A judicious regulation in the attitude, gestures and manner of the player is as necessary, and of as much consequence to the truth of his action, as all that can be done by the codification. The general deportment and proper attitudes in the several scenes a performer may be engag'd in, have been sufficiently treated of in the preceding chapters; we shall therefore avoid repetitions, and content ourselves with some general remarks on the particular gestures necessary under peculiar circumstances.

✓ Gestures have a determinate signification, as much as words; and, when properly apply'd, they add a vast deal of life and force to the action.

The most significant of them will even serve to express to an audience every passion that we are capable of being agitated by, and raise in the spectators every sentiment that we wish to inspire them with: Without the assistance of words, we are able to signify by gestures and signs our hopes, our fears, our satisfaction, or our displeasure. We can entreat by them, and obtain our requests as readily as if words were added to them. We can lament and express our distress and sorrow by them, and that in so plain and intelligible a manner, as to force others to weep with us; and finally, we can threaten by them, and by those threatnings excite terror.

✓ The signs which we use to express these several intentions of the soul are not however merely arbitrary, they are dictated by nature's self, and are common to all mankind. The language of signs we all speak without having been taught

\* taught it; by means of which we are able to converse with people of all nations; and nature has been so determinate in the sense of every particle of it, that art would attempt in vain to make it either more intelligible or more expressive. The utmost that can be done by the nicest hand, is to polish and ornament it; and all that the player needs, or indeed is able to do, is only to avoid improprieties in it, and to be careful to use it only in such parts as nature shews it to be necessary and useful in.

The judgment of the player must inform him, that when he acts the part of a man of high rank and quality, he is to use fewer gestures, and those less violent than when he acts a clown; nor is it difficult to guess from whence this necessary distinction arises. Nature left to herself, is under less restraint, and runs into more irregular emotions, than when curb'd and regulated by a proper education.

People in high life have the same affections with the vulgar; but they have more hypocrisy. Their very passions put on the air of dissimulation, which has been inculcated into them in all their other actions, and appear moderate and reasonable even when they are the most inordinate and ungovern'd. A man of high rank is in a manner sedate and tranquil even in his resentment, while a cobbler under the same circumstances wou'd be outrageous, kick the tables and chairs about the house, and half murder his wife and children, tho' they did not even know what it was that put him in this fury.

If the frequent use of passionate gestures is on this account not allowable in genteel comedy,  
much

much less is it so in tragedy: As much as the gentleman is above the vulgar, so much is the king or heroe above the private gentleman: If the former is expected to maintain a certain dignity and respect adequate to his rank above the commonalty; the latter is under infinitely greater necessity of supporting his character by a majestic deportment, and keeping up, by a grave and sedate carriage, the high idea we have formed of his virtues and accomplishments.

No less eminent a player than Mr. *Garrick* has been accus'd of not keeping up this dignity in some of his tragedy characters. We can by no means agree with those who are for making the charge general against him, but are apt to believe that the people who do so, are influenced merely by his want of figure; and give no little proof of their own incapacity of being struck by things of much greater consequence.

His *Macbeth* and *Richard*, we take to be master-pieces in this kind; and many of his other characters are kept up at least with so much dignity, that a candid spectator will not think him censurable in this respect; but there are some in which he is evidently wanting. In *Pierre*, perhaps, we shou'd not see this defect in him, if we had not an unlucky comparison at hand, with that player in the same part, who certainly excells all the world in this peculiar article. When *Jaffier* mentions honesty as a virtue that is not fit for this world, Mr. *Garrick* forgets the dignity of his character to give into a shrewdness and severity very natural to him, and in general very becoming, when he answers him,

I

Why,

Why, powerful villainy first set it up  
 For its own ease and safety—Honest men  
 Are the soft easy cushions on which knaves  
 Repose and fatten: Were all mankind villains  
 They'd starve each other; lawyers wou'd want  
 practice,  
 Cut-throats rewards: each man wou'd kill his  
 brother  
 Himself! none wou'd be paid or hang'd for mur-  
 ther:  
 Honesty! 'twas a cheat invented first  
 To bind the hands of bold deserving rogues,  
 That fools and cowards might sit safe in power,  
 And lord it uncontrol'd above their betters.

We are pleased with the force and strength  
 he gives to the satire in this speech, the keenness  
 of which has never been so great in any other  
 mouth; but we are vexed to find the dignity of the  
 character quite forgot in the speaking it.

There is the same defect in his playing *Lear*,  
 and that from the same cause. It is not that Mr.  
*Garriick* is not equal to the task of keeping up  
 the dignity of a king or a hero; we find by  
 the instances first cited that he is; but he gives  
 way to thoughts of another kind in so great a  
 degree, that he frequently loses this part of his  
 character. It is the same natural turn to be se-  
 vere, that robs us of the king in *Lear*, which  
 before sunk the hero in *Pierre*, as this gentle-  
 man plays it. *Shakspear* has put some of the  
 keenest things he ever wrote into the mouth of  
 this enrag'd monarch, and this player gives them  
 a peculiar strength and sharpness in the expres-  
 sion; but then the king is not found in the sa-  
 tyrist,



tyrist, they are rather sharp things deliver'd as any other character of the play might have said them.

Even in the mad scenes, we know from another player's manner of conducting them, the majesty of the monarch may be kept up amidst the wildest sallies of the frantic lunatic; but surely the best friends of Mr. *Garrick* will not dispute with us, that in this whole part of the play, he looks as like a mad and thing else, as a mad king. *Shakespeare* has every where kept up *Lear's* remembrance of his regal state even in his utmost ravings; he introduces him with the ornaments of royalty about him, tho' made of weeds and straw, and makes him remember that he is *every inch a king*: But 'tis *Shakespeare* only, not the actor in this case that does it: even when this player says,

When I do stare, see how the subject quakes.  
I pardon that man's life—What was the cause?  
Adultery—Thou shalt not die! Die for adultery!  
No; the wren goes to't, and the small gilded  
fly engenders in my sight. Let copulation thrive:  
For *Gloster's* bastard son was kinder to his father,  
than were my daughters got i'the lawful bed.  
To't, Luxury, pell mell, for I want soldiers.

The judicious observer, tho' pleased with the just emphasis laid on the words, tho' charm'd with the spirit with which they are spoken, yet cannot but observe, that they are not deliver'd with a kingly majesty: They seem rather the flights of a man whose madness made him fancy himself a monarch, than of one who ever really was so.

We mention this foible of this, in most things, inimitable performer, principally for the sake of the growing set of players, who seem to think him the standard of perfection in every thing. People's faults are much more easily imitated than their beauties, and this is one which those who are fond of being thought like Mr. *Garrick* are most apt to fall into. If they wou'd form themselves on the judgment of others, let them to the life, spirit, and vivacity of Mr. *Garrick*, join an imitation as nearly as they can of the dignity of Mr. *Quin*.

We shall not be thought partial to this gentleman, we hope, if we say that no man at present equals him, or perhaps ever did in this great article of the player's profession.

How easily do we perceive in him, even in this very scene of *Lear*, that it is a king who rails! With what a majesty as well as sharpness, with what an awful severity does he cry out,

See how yon Justice rails on that simple thief. Shake 'em together, and the first that drops out, thief or justice, is a villain—Thou hast seen a farmer's dog bark at a beggar; and the man ran away from the cur: There thou might'st behold the great image of authority—A dog's obey'd in office. Thou rascal beadle, hold thy heavy hand: why dost thou lash that strumpet? 'Thou hotly lusts to enjoy her in that very kind for which thou whip'st her. Do, do—The judge that sentenc'd her has been before hand with thee.

We

We may observe that in these parts it is most difficult of all others to keep up a true dignity ; and in which, with the utmost advantages, it appears least striking. If we would see it in a higher light, let us observe this in the part in which we have observ'd one of the greatest actors in the world to fail in this respect, that of *Pierre*: with what a majesty of deportment does he introduce that character on the stage, censuring himself with a noble severity for not becoming the avenger of an injured people ; with what an air of true dignity does he tell *Jaffier*,

I am a rogue as well as they,  
A fine gay bold-fac'd villain as thou see'st me ;  
'Tis true, I pay my debts when they 're contracted ;  
I steal from no man, wou'd not cut a throat  
To gain admission to a great man's purse  
Or a whore's bed : I'd not betray my friend  
To get his place or fortune: I scorn to flatter  
A blown-upfool above me, to crush the wretch  
beneath me,  
Yet, *Jaffier*, for all this I am a villain !  
Yes, and a most notorious villain ;  
To see the sufferings of my fellow creatures,  
And own my self a man : To see our senators  
Cheat the deluded people with a shew  
Of liberty, which yet they never taste of.  
They say by them our hands are free from fetters,  
Yet whom they please they lay in basest bonds,  
Bring whom they please to infamy and sorrow ;  
Drive us like wrecks down the rough tide of power,

While there's no hold to save us from destruction.

All that bear this are villains, and I one,  
Not to rouse up at the great call of nature,  
To check the growth of these domestic spoilers,  
Who make us slaves, and tell us 'tis our charter.

Perhaps there have been few characters so happily introduc'd to us, as that of *Pierre* is by these sentiments ; we see at once the greatness of soul we are to expect from him in every circumstance that shall follow ; and, as Mr. *Quin* plays the part, we are never shock'd with the absence of that greatness, even for a single moment.

When this player has the advantage of such a character as *Cato*, or *Bajazet*, his task is easier in this way : he rises in those with the greatest ease to a dignity that a character of this more private rank would not bear, and that nobody else equals : but there is yet another part in which he excels even his dignity in these. The character we mean is *Comus* : in this, thro' the whole part, he is something more than man : the majesty of the *Deity* he represents, dwells about him in every attitude, and in the pronouncing every period ; with what a superior greatness does he introduce himself to us by his manner of delivering the glorious lines that open his part.

The star that bids the shepherd fold,  
Now the top of heav'n doth hold,  
And the gilded car of day  
His glowing axle doth allay  
In the steep Atlantic stream,  
While the slope sun his upward beam  
Shoots against the dusky pole,  
Pacing tow'rd the other goal

Of



Of his chamber in the east ;  
 Mean-time welcome joy and feast.

And with what dignity, after the song that is  
 perform'd here, does he go on,

We that are of purer fire  
 Imitate the starry choir,  
 Who in their nightly watchful spheres  
 Lead in swift dance the months and years.  
 The sounds, the seas, and all their finny drove,  
 Now to the morn in wav'ring morrice move ;  
 While on the tawny sands and shelves  
 Trip the pert fairies, and the dapper elves.

His invocation of *Cotytto*, which succeeds this, is deliver'd with equal judgment with the rest. When men invoke the *Divinity*, they are to do it with the utmost humility and awe ; but the player, here, remembers that he is only addressing to an equal ; himself a *deity*, and the imaginary being he addresses to, no more. 'Tis therefore a peculiar mark of his judgment, as we have observ'd, not a blemish in his playing, as some have suppos'd, that he here keeps up all the dignity he had set out with, and in the same spirit in which he had before spoke, continues,

Hail, goddess of nocturnal sport,  
 Dark-veil'd *Cotytto*, t' whom the secret flame  
 Of midnight torches burns, mysterious dame,  
 Who ne'er art call'd, but when the dragon womb  
 Of Stygian darkness spits her thickest gloom,  
 And makes one blot of all the air,  
 Stay thy cloudy Ebon chair,  
 Wherein thou rid'st with *Hecate*, and befriend

Us, thy vow'd priests, till utmost end  
 Of all thy dues be done, and none left out,  
 Ere the babbling eastern scout,  
 'The nice morn on the Indian steep,  
 From her cabin'd loop-hole peep,  
 And to the tell-tale sun descry  
 Our conceal'd solemnity.

The manner in which he makes love to the lady, is of a piece with the rest. He is passionately enamour'd of her; but then he courts her not with supplications, but with promises; he gives her reasons for complying with him, rather than entreaties to do so; and this in a tone and manner becoming a superior, not an inferior: in short, he makes love in a very moving and almost compulsive way; but that rather as a *Deity* than a *Mortal*.

To sum up the praise of this quality in the performer we are mentioning in this part, we shall not scruple to affirm, that if any thing claims the title of being the greatest sentence, and most nobly pronounc'd of any on the *English* theatre, it is that threat of *Comus* to the lady, where, on her offering to get up to leave him, he tells her,

Nay, lady, sit—If I but wave this wand,  
 Your nerves are all bound up in alabaster,  
 And you a statue: or, as *Daphne* was,  
 Root-bound, who fled *Apollo*.

The majesty of this menace will perhaps always lose half its power, when spoken by any body but the person we are celebrating for it.

These

These are the general rules for the deportment of the actor, where no peculiar occasion calls for gestures ; but in many scenes of tragedy, and particularly in many of those of the greatest tenderness, or of the most violent emotions of the soul, from whatever cause, the actor is absolved from the general injunction, and is expected not only to use every proper gesture in its utmost force, that can mark to the audience any passion, any affection of the soul ; but he must even have recourse to many others which have no regular signification in their own nature, and yet serve to keep up the life and spirit of the action. It is not to be understood, however, that every passionate part in tragedy necessarily demands all these assistances : it is even true, on the contrary, that some of the greatest and most affecting scenes we know of, require no gestures at all ; many of them would be render'd ridiculous by them ; and perhaps it is not more just to tell the greatest actor of one of our houses, that *Othello* would be more *Othello* with more gestures, than to inform a favourite of the other, that *Romeo* and *Castalio* would express some of their most tender scenes much better if their arms had a little more rest allow'd them.

Those gestures which tragedy allows as ornamentative, rather than expressive, are vastly more under the command of art than the others ; as they have no meaning in themselves, the player gives them just such as he pleases by the look he adds to them : these are amusing, but the others are infinitely more important, as they regard that greatest of all considerations to the judicious player, the truth of action.

An audience will expect that the gestures of a performer, even when they express nothing, should yet have an air of expression and meaning; and particularly that they should seem easy and natural, not study'd, elaborate, and practis'd. In those characters which are meant most of all to interest an audience, every motion should keep up an air of dignity; and not only in these, but in every other part, they should be occasionally varied. When they continue the same throughout several scenes, the audience cannot but look on them as the habits of the man who acts, not as the effects of impressions given him in the different situations and circumstances of the character he is representing.

To these rules we may add another more general one. The player ought to use more or fewer gestures of every kind, according to the taste of the nation in which he performs. In *France* he should use greatly more than in *England*; and in *England* more than in *Italy*.

One farther remark may serve to close this chapter. There are some characters (to the honour of our poets be it spoken, they are principally in our farces, particularly in those which are borrowed from the *French*) which have been invented out of mere caprice and wantonness of fancy, and have nothing in real life that is at all like them. The actor has here no sure rules to go by, no model to form his character upon. Was there ever, among mankind such a monster as the *Mock-Doctor*? and what is the player to do who is to represent a thing that does not exist? Our way of judging of the performer in this case is, usually, by comparing him with the player whom we remember to have last perform'd the  
same



same character with success; no matter whether he were right or wrong, we judge that best for ever after which is most like what he did. The judicious player, who takes up a character of this kind, is therefore to make it his first care not to differ too much from the last person who excelled in it. Perhaps the only way to please the greater part of an audience as well as he did, is to copy his faults: if even this is necessary, it must be in some degree at least submitted to; since, in general, the more like the new actor's play is to what the people have been used to, the better they will be pleas'd with it.

#### C H A P. IV.

##### *On the Truth of Recitation.*

**I**T will not avail that the action of a player is ever so just, so judicious and expressive, if his delivery, or, as it may be more properly call'd, his recitation be faulty. When the performer has a judicious audience to act before, it is in vain for him to expect applause for pleasing the eyes, if he does not at the same time please the ears and the understanding.

There are a multitude of passages in the antient writers which prove, that the delivery of their dramatic writings was not left to the discretion of the actors, but was determined by note and measure. That this was the case is pretty certain; but perhaps it is yet to be determin'd, whether a theatrical representation would be the better or the worse for the addition of so strict a regularity.

A very eminent writer, the Abbe *Condillac*, in his *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge*, is of opinion,

opinion, that if the tones and cadences of the voice of our comic actors were to be regulated by the laws of musick, the performances would be infinitely more pleasing than they are at present; but it should seem that in this case, their recitation would be in a kind of song, and we should at least be reduced to hear our sprightliest sentiments deliver'd in something like the recitative of an opera; a sort of musick which those who go to an entertainment in which they expect their ears only to be charm'd, and that even at the expence of their understanding, have enough to do to reconcile themselves to, under the name either of speaking or singing. Surely we should not easily bring ourselves to suppose, that a part was well play'd because it was well sung. It is to be allow'd indeed, that the notes of the musick not leaving the singer at liberty to choose his own tones and cadences, he is not in the same danger that the player is of choosing wrong ones: but all that playing could gain by musick of the very best kind being adapted to it, would be, at the utmost, no more than the additional power which musick has in itself of expressing the different passions by its determinate sounds; and this, tho' a vast deal has been said in favour of the antient musick about it, does not appear at present to be at all adequate to the force and expression that must be lost, by a good speaker's being deny'd to give the utmost force to the words of the author in his recitation.

The ablest judges seem to give it in favour of mere speaking; and others, when they have said all the fine things they can of recitative musick, are oblig'd to allow that it has declamatory speaking for its foundation;

foundation ; nay, they even own, that it has no real expression but what it borrows from the voice which delivers the words that its musick is adapted to : and it is another unlucky observation, that the same notes may serve very well for different words, and those of very different sense and meaning.

It is to be added to all this, that let the musick be ever so well adapted to the passions concern'd, let it be ever so expressive, and let it be ever so perfectly perform'd by the singing actor, the world will never allow that a scene thus sung to an audience, will keep up the appearance of a reality, and sustain that illusion which is the life of all playing, nearly so well as one in which the players speak in their natural voice and accent.

The Abbé *du Bos*, another *Frenchman*, who has written with great success on poetry and painting, has deliver'd it as his opinion, that the figures taught to the ancient Greek and Roman players, as their guides and directors in the delivery of the words of the poet, were not properly musical notes, but were a kind of marks and signatures intended to express those elevations and depressions, and the other changes of the voice which the passions occasion, in some degree, in common conversation. We know the respect that is due to the character of this writer, but we can by no means subscribe to his opinion. He supposes that it is possible to ascertain the strength and expression of the tones of the voice as agitated by the passions, and to proportion their degrees by rule, according to the degree of the emotion of the mind, which they are to be suppos'd to arise from ; but all this is fairly overthrown by the before-mention'd *Condillac*, who has demonstrated, beyond all contradiction, they can never  
be

be thus determin'd, as to their strength ; nor ever regulated by the proportion they bear to other given tones, which was the grand rule the Abbé *du Bos* had establish'd for the ascertaining their value.

There is not more falsity in this hypothesis of the learned author, than in his other great supposition, That nature has allotted only one true tone of voice for the expression of every single passion.

This is an error that requires very little trouble in the refuting : Every man has a peculiar voice by which he may be known from every other man in the world, tho' his person be not seen ; and in consequence of this, every one has his own peculiar inflexion of voice, by which he expresses the impressions which he feels, and which conveys the idea he intends by it to others, only as it differs from the general tenor of his voice in plain speaking.

There is no doubt, indeed, but the different inflexions which arise from the same impression in the voices of different men, have something in common to them all ; but it must be also allowed, that they necessarily differ according to the different organs of the person who expresses himself by them ; in the same manner as the accent and cadence of any particular nation, tho' it carry with it something that distinguishes it in every speaker from the accent of all other nations in the world, yet varies almost infinitely in the different persons who speak the dialects of the several provinces.

The tones of voice which fall under the consideration of the actor have, besides all these varieties, many others, which arise from the peculiar



liar characters of the persons who express themselves by them. The anger of some men is a sort of thunder, which makes ten thousand times more noise than is proportion'd to the mischief it does; while that of others is a sort of still fire, which smother'd under the ashes, which throws out no flames, but which is the more to be dreaded, as it gives no notice of the effects it is ready to produce.

It will be easily seen from these observations, that the art of delivering a sentiment justly, or, as we otherwise call it, the truth of recitation, can never be treated methodically, or deliver'd in the form of a science. In order to this, it would be necessary to lay down as many sets of rules, as nature has given to mankind tones of voice, and different manners of expressing the same impression. All the lessons that the ablest instructor would be able to give upon this art, would be of no more use to the performer, for whose assistance they were intended, than the description, if it were possible to describe it, of the manner in which *Mrs. Cibber* engages our affection, our tears, in the character of *M. Minia*, (in which she seems inspir'd with the very genius of the author who wrote the part, and with the very soul of the heroine whom she represents) would be to another actress, who would wish to succeed by imitation of that manner, tho' without the genius or the soul that gave existence to it in the original.

If we would attempt to give the most infallible of all rules to the other performers, for the avoiding all false cadences, all improper tones in their delivery, and for giving us truth of recitation in every sentence, it ought to be by advising them

to follow the example of that actress, and speak as nearly as may be in the manner she does, when she performs parts which have some resemblance to those which they are to represent. Nothing could be more desirable, in the generality of our actors, than attempts of this kind ; but nothing can be more difficult, not to say impossible, than to succeed to any great degree in them. We can no more, in a continued discourse, appropriate to ourselves all the inflexions of voice that we have admired in another person, than we can invariably, for a long time together, speak in an accent that is not natural to us. All that can be pretended to in this way, with any degree of success, is to imitate, as nearly as that may be done, certain of the finer and more striking cadences of those performers, whose natural tone of voice is most like that of the person is to attempt the imitation : as to the rest, nature alone can dictate what will be most expressive ; and the sense of what is to be spoken is the only instructor which can disclose the secrets of that eloquent magick of sounds, by which the player is to excite in his audience all those emotions which it is his business to make them feel.

The principal of all these secrets is, not to employ indifferently those cadences, which tho' they are something alike in sound, yet are different enough to be made, with proper management, the means of distinguishing very different passions. The tones of the voice, under the command of the actor, may be rang'd under different genera, each of which is compos'd of a number of species, in the same manner as every one of the primitive

mitive colours divides itself into a multitude of different shades.

We may regard, for example, that tone by which we express authority \*, and that by which we express pride, as both belonging to the same genus ; but yet it is evident that these two have their differences one from the other. By the first, we very frequently express no more than the just sense which we have of our own dignity ; but by the other, we are always to be understood to carry the opinion we have of our greatness, much beyond the bounds of truth and reality.

The tone of voice, peculiar to the simple creature who discloses all his heart to every body he meets, is very like that in which the prudent but ingenuous man declares the truth in any affair he is interrogated upon. They are both evidently of the same genus ; but it would be an egregious blunder to use, or to understand, one of them for the other. The first is the tone of a weak person, who having neither understanding nor resolution enough to conceal his sentiments, reveals every thought of his heart, even in cases where it is his interest that they should be un-

\* It may be imagined by some, that we are here contradicting ourselves on this head ; and that after having asserted that there may be several true and just tones used to express the same passion, we are here admitting only one to express the sense of greatness which a man in authority carries always about him. We must observe, that we here use the term collectively ; and mean, tho' we speak in the singular number, every tone that is proper to express the sentiment in question ; and the reader is desired to understand the same, in regard to all the other tones which we are about to mention.

known : the other is a sign of candour, not of weakness or folly ; and is generally the attribute of those persons who are sufficiently masters of themselves to be able to disguise their manner of thinking, or even their sensibility of accidents adverse or fortunate, but whose innate honour and virtue will not suffer them to betray the truth.

There are some tones of the voice which are to be varied even under the same genus. The figure of speech, which we call irony, may be equally dictated to us by anger, by contempt, or by mere mirth and good humour ; but the ironical tone of voice, which is proper for the expressing one of these kind of sentiments, is by no means proper to explain ourselves by, when we mean either of the other two.

Love and friendship, in the same manner, frequently speak the same language ; but the tone of voice by which they are to be expressed, is by no means the same : even the tones in which the various kinds of friendship itself are to be deliver'd, differ extremely from one another. That by which a father expresses his tenderness and care for his favourite son, is very different from that by which the sentiments of one friend are expressed to another no way related to him.



## C H A P. V.

*What ought to be the Manner of Recitation in Comedy.*

EXCEPTING only a very few instances, in which it is the business of the player to entertain his audience with an affected and intentionally ridiculous, declamatory manner, nothing in comedy is to be deliver'd in the way of declamation. It is a general, and, allowing only for a very few exceptions, an indispensable rule, that the actor, in comedy, is to recite as naturally as possible : he is to deliver what he has to say, in the very same manner that he would have spoken it off the stage, if he had been in the same circumstances in real life that the person he represents is plac'd in.

There is much less difficulty in conforming to this rule, in speaking the parts in those comedies which are written in what is now the usual and natural manner, that is, in prose, than there was in delivering the author's language in the same natural manner, when an absurd custom had, an age or two ago, made it necessary for the author to throw many at least, if not all his speeches, into verse. In *France* the same species of folly, in a great measure, still reigns ; and tho' it is the interest of the actors there, if they know the value of their reputation, to speak, for this reason, nothing but prose, and notwithstanding that among whole companies of their comedians, it is no uncommon thing not to have so much as one person who can speak verse decently ; yet the whole company generally prefer the plays writ-

ten in verse ; and this for no better reason, than that their parts in them are more easily remembered.

The *French* audiences also greatly help forward this false taste, as the generality of them never fail to give the preference to a comedy written in verse, tho' the poet has evidently both cramp'd himself, and thrown a thousand difficulties in the way of the performer by writing it so.

It is not the business of a treatise of this kind to determine, whether the laws of poetry, so far as they regard versification, belong to comedy, properly so call'd, or not ; or whether there are some, and only some cases in which they may, or ought to be admitted. Perhaps the judicious reader of those comedies that have been written in it, will find, that one great reason for the author's adding this tinsel to his piece, has been his wanting sterling merit to recommend it ; and that one great thing that discountenanc'd prose, among those writers who set it on foot, was, that as it had only the wit it contain'd to recommend it, there requir'd more of that valuable commodity in it, than where there was something that might amuse the ear without it.

Nothing can be more evident, than that rhyme and measure always tend to take off greatly from the air of truth, nature and reality, which the dialogue would otherwise have. In consequence of this, the actor's principal care and study ought to be, wherever he is encumber'd with these fetters, to break the one, and, as much as possible, sink and lose the other in the reciting. Several of our *Shakespear's* and *Ben Johnson's* plays have passages in rhyme and measure, in some parts ; and that excellent composition *Co-*

*mus* abounds too much in them, in the character of the God of Revels; yet, to the honour of *Volpone* and *Comus*, we mean when Mr. *Quin* represents those characters, perhaps it has not been found out by any body, that has not read as well as seen those pieces, that there is a line in measure, or a single rhyme in either of them.

We have had occasion to speak of this great player's delivering the invocation to *Cotytto*, in his character of *Comus* in another place, and that on another account. It may be added here, that this is one of those passages in *Comus* where the rhyme breaks in upon the solemnity and sense, and in which Mr. *Quin* wholly sinks it upon us; delivering the words in their natural periods, without regard either to the jingle or to the measure; except that he preserves so much of the last as is enough, without rendering his delivery forc'd or stiff, to keep up a peculiar smoothness and majesty in it.

Another instance, in the same piece, is his courting the lady as she sits in the enchanted chair. The poet has thrown every thing that he here delivers, into rhyme and a peculiar measure, but Mr. *Quin* sinks both in a great degree upon us, and by that means gives a majesty to the sense that it wants in every mouth beside. Who, as we before observ'd, that had not read the piece, would find out the rhymes as he speaks this;

Hence, loathed melancholy,  
Of Cerberus and blackest midnight born,  
In Stygian cave forlorn,  
'Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks and sighs unholy,  
Find out some uncouth cell

Where

Where brooding darkness spreads his jealous wings,  
And the night-raven sings.

There, under Ebon shades, and low-brow'd rocks,  
As ragged as thy locks,  
In deep Cimmerian darkness ever dwell.

But come, thou goddess fair and free,  
In heav'n yclep'd, Euphrosyne,  
And by men, heart-easing mirth,  
Whom lovely Venus at a birth,  
With two sister-graces more,  
'To ivy-crowned Bacchus bore.  
Haste thee, nymph, and bring with thee  
Jest and youthful jollity :  
Quips and cranks, and wanton wiles ;  
Nods and becks, and wreathed smiles,  
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,  
And love to live in dimple sleek,  
Sport that wrinkled care derides,  
And laughter holding both his sides.  
Come, and trip it as you go,  
On the light fantastic toe ;  
And in thy right-hand lead with thee  
The mountain-nymph, sweet Liberty.

The spirit with which this player delivers this truly poetical speech, is such, as perhaps never was, or will be equal'd ; and we hardly know whether most to admire, that or his judgment, in the peculiar article we have been treating of, the making us lose the rhyme, which here would add a stiffness to what the poet meant, and making it the freest speech in the world. There is another, in the same scene, yet more severely loaded with the double chain of rhyme and measure ; it is even thrown into the stanza's and alternate rhyme of a ballad ; yet the

art



art of this player almost entirely throws off both, and gives the true force and dignity to the sentiment contained in it, that it would have had if deliver'd in prose. The passage we mean is, his address to the lady after the entertainment his magic had given her.

Cast thine eyes around and see  
 How from ev'ry element,  
 Nature's sweets are cull'd for thee,  
 And her choicest blessings sent.  
 Fire, water, earth, and air combine  
 To compose the rich repast ;  
 Their aid the distant seasons join,  
 To court thy smell, thy sight, thy taste.  
 Hither summer, autumn, spring,  
 Hither all your tributes bring ;  
 Here on bended knee be seen  
 Doing homage to your queen.

If we would see a beauty of this kind, set off in its true light and value by comparison, let us recollect the under players acting in one of *Lee's* tragedies. Whoever has seen *Hannibal's Overthrow* has found that some, tho' very good players, and particularly excellent in their characters there, have not the address to keep the unnatural jingle of the rhyme out of their ears, even in some of the most passionate scenes ; but the subalterns never fail to give it us strong at every tenth syllable, let the sense fare as it can. The *Tag*, in the *Orphan*, famous for having been spoke in this manner,

To his temptation lewdly she inclin'd  
 Her soul, and for an apple damn'd mankind,

was also for a long time deliver'd, by successive players, with such a religious observance of the rhyme, that there was almost as absolute a stop at the end of one of the lines, as at that of the other.

A more modern instance, and one which we wish to see mended, as it is of the number of the few things that displease us in a very pleasing play, is that of the *Friar* in *Romeo and Juliet*, who enters, at his morning employ of gathering medicinal herbs for the use of the poor, with these lines.

The grey-ey'd morn smiles on the frowning night,  
Cheq'ring the eastern clouds with streaks of light ;  
Now ere the sun advance his burning eye  
The day to chear, or night's dank dew to dry,  
I must fill up this osier cage of ours  
With potent herbs, and precious juiced flow'rs.

Mighty is the powerful grace that lies  
In herbs, trees, stones, and their true qualities :  
For nought so vile that on the earth doth live,  
But to the earth some special good doth give ;  
Nor ought so good but, strain'd from its fair use,  
Revolts to vice, and stumbles on abuse.

The poet, according to the fashion of the times, has thrown this into rhyme ; but we do not want the player to put us in continual mind of that blemish, or to preserve what we wish had not been exhibited : we dare pronounce it, that if the actor we have mentioned before had these lines to speak, their sense would affect the audience as much more than it at present does, as the rhyme would be less distinguish'd.

## C H A P. VI.

*Whether Tragedy ought or ought not to be spoke in a declamatory manner.*

PERHAPS, among all the questions that have been or may be started upon the subject of the player's profession, there is no one about which the world is less agreed than this, Whether or not declamation be a proper manner of speaking for the performer in tragedy? The occasion of all the diversity of opinions which we meet with on this head, however, rather arises from disputes about words than about things; and many who strenuously oppose the decisions of one another on the subject, only do it because they understand the terms *declamatory* and *declamation* in a different sense from one another.

Those who argue the most strongly against this manner of delivery in tragedy, in general understand by declamatory speaking, that unmeaning recitation, that unnatural and monotonous delivery which too many of our second rate players have fallen into; and which, as it is not dictated by nature, may indeed deafen and weary the ears of an audience, but can never speak either to the understanding or to the heart.

Declamatory speaking of this kind ought to be banish'd from every part, from every kind of tragedy; but our modern criticks, who, to avoid this extreme, run into the other contrary one of asserting that the verse of tragedy can never be spoke too familiarly, or brought too near to com-

mon conversation, forget that they are by this means robbing the tragic muse of a great part of her native and appropriated majesty, which in many cases, tho' not in all, is to be kept up by the dignity of accent in the speaker. There was a time indeed when every thing in tragedy, if it was but the delivering a common message, was spoken in high heroics; but of late years this absurdity has been in a great measure banish'd from the *English*, as well as from the *French* stage. The *French* owe this rational improvement in their tragedy to *Baron* and *Madam Cuvreur*, and we to that excellent player *Mr. Macklin*: the pains he took while entrusted with the care of the actors at *Drury-Lane*, and the attention which the success of those pains acquir'd him from the now greatest actors of the *English* theatre, have founded for us a new method of the delivering tragedy from the first rate actors, and banish'd the bombast that us'd to wound our ears continually from the mouths of the subordinate ones, who were eternally aiming to mimic the majesty that the principal performers employ'd on scenes that were of the utmost consequence, in the delivery of the most simple and familiar phrases, adapted to the trivial occasions which were afforded them to speak on.

It is certain that the players ought very carefully to avoid a too lofty and sonorous delivery when a sentiment only, not a passion, is to be express'd: it ought also, as the excellent instructor just mention'd us'd eternally to be inculcating into his pupils, to be always avoided when a simple recital of facts was the substance of what was to be spoken, or when pure and cool reasoning was the sole meaning of the scene:

but



but tho' he banish'd noise and vehemence on these occasions, he allow'd that on many others, the pompous and founding delivery were just, nay were necessary in this species of playing, and that no other manner of pronouncing the words was fit to accompany the thought the author expressed by them, or able to convey it to the audience in its intended and proper dignity.

For the same reason that induces many people who wholly condemn measure in comedy, to admit and recommend it in tragedy, we are of opinion that a more elevated and pompous manner of expression is proper in the latter, than is to be suffered in the former.

When a piece of any kind is read to us, we are not satisfy'd with the person who reads it, if he does not accommodate his tone of voice to the nature of the matter of the treatise; and even in common conversation we find no fault with an oratorical tone, provided the subject be of importance. The native majesty of many parts of almost every tragedy require, for the same reason, that the performer deliver them not in a common tone of voice, but with a dignity which extremely well becomes such sentiments, tho' it would be absurd if misapply'd to trifles; nay, even in the other parts of a well written tragedy, we are not much hurt by a majesty of delivery, provided that the state and dignity of the speaker be such as set him in a very conspicuous light, and place him much above the vulgar.

We are naturally apt to regard the antient heroes of *Greece* and *Rome* with a peculiar respect, imbib'd with our earliest education, and to esteem them as it were a species of men different from, and plac'd above ourselves; we therefore are not

surpriz'd to hear a *Cato* or a *Pyrrhus* deliver himself in a manner far more majestic than the usual form of speech.

The pompous form of delivering tragedy is yet more peculiarly adapted to certain parts in those plays in which the events are taken from the stories of the heroic ages: without doubt the player ought, in all things, to keep within proper bounds; he is not, even in these cases, to go vastly beyond nature: all that is to be allow'd him, is to shew us these scenes in a decent magnificence. Perhaps it is for this reason that no man ever did, or probably ever will, play the part of *Comus* with the same success that Mr. *Quin* has done: notwithstanding that his person and age are very improper for the representation of a gay, young, and wanton god of revels; the majesty of his voice, and that pomp and dignity which he has been able to give to the declarations of that deity, charm and astonish us, and help in a great measure to keep up the illusion. The poet intended representing the character Mr. *Quin* plays in this masque, not as a man but something greater. The *French* have likewise had an instance of a like kind in a character they have lately much admir'd, and which being a magic power rais'd far above the ordinary pitch of human nature, they heard, with a just applause, rais'd also above mere nature in the speaking: the character we mean is *Medea*. When this forcerefs is lamenting the absence of her faithless husband, the actresses who represented her on that stage speaks like another woman; but when she enters on the solemn rites of her mysteries, when she invokes the triple Hecate, and whirls along the air with her dragons, it was with the highest admiration that they

they heard the actress raise her voice to something more than mortal, and thunder out her menaces.

## C H A P. VII.

*Of certain Obstacles which impair the Truth of the Recitation.*

ONE of the greatest obstacles we have to complain of on this account is an untucky habit which too many of our players have fallen into, of straining their voices. When a man does not play in his natural tone, it is hardly possible that he should play with truth: if the performers were themselves sensible but of half the mischief this unnatural trick does them, they would take infinite pains to keep within their compass. The very best voice may be render'd inharmonic by being carry'd beyond its pitch, and where there is any natural imperfection in the organ, it becomes vastly more sensible in every strain, than it can be in speaking within compass. We have several voices at this time upon the stage, which, in their medium, are not disagreeable, but which, when the performer chuses to stretch them beyond their pitch, become insupportable to the ear.

Another powerful obstacle to the truth of a player's recitation, is monotony. Of this fault in delivery there are properly three kinds: first, a continual perseverance in the same modulation of voice; secondly, a too great resemblance in the closes of periods or speeches; and thirdly, a too frequent repetition of the same inflexions.

The first of these kinds of monotony is much more general in this age than it is commonly supposed to be, and is equally the fault of our players in comedy and in tragedy : a great number of the present race of actors are from this fault eternally piping out the same tune, like those little wind instruments with which people teach birds to sing. The second kind is yet more common among our actors than the first, but it is in a manner peculiar to tragedy ; the very people who play in comedy with some sort of natural cadence, frequently when they have blank verse put into their mouths, take up a sort of cant tone, and seem to think it a duty to close every sentence with an octave below. We are sorry to bear hard upon the other sex ; but as every thing that carries the face of censure here is not meant as raillery but as hints for improvement, we cannot but observe that the actresses in tragedy are more faulty in this kind of monotony than the performers of the other sex ; and that some who are now but in a midling rank upon the stage would rise much higher, in the judgments of all those who are worth pleasing, if they could break themselves of this absurd and unnatural custom. We have already mention'd a *Lavinia* who charm'd us very little less than the *Calista* of the same play, tho' confessedly the greatest actress on the present stage ; but this happen'd only once from this lady ; the next time it was our fate to see her, all the pleasing and sensible variety of her voice was lost, every period closed alike, and the finest language that was ever yet put into the mouth of a woman, that of the *Lady* in *Comus*, became lifeless and insipid. The actress hinted at will pardon the freedom of this remark, which  
would



would not have been deliver'd, but from the remembrance that ill habits newly contracted are easily removed.

The players in comedy are very rarely to be reproached with the third species of monotony, the too frequent repetitions of the same inflexions of voice ; but we find those who perform in tragedy have a great deal of trouble to guard against it : where the numbers and measure are the same, it is very natural that the pronunciation should run into the same equality ; and the necessity that the performers in the modern tragedy are under, from time to time, of delivering with a pompous accent a long chain of blank verses, exposes them too much to it.

It wou'd be a very obvious piece of advice on this occasion, especially to the younger actors, to avoid as much as possible resting at the end of a line ; but it would not be equally just. Verse is the natural language of tragedy ; and tho' where the sense continues, the measure is not to command a stop, yet when it is equal where to pause, some preference ought generally to be given to the observance of it.

It is otherwise indeed in our tragedies which are written in rhyme, as was the fashion an age or two ago ; in these the judicious speaker, as in the like unnatural passages in comedy, sinks the rhyme wherever the observance of the sense pleads at all for his doing it ; and we see enough of the folly and absurdity of the contrary practice in some of our subordinate people, who in *Hannibal's Overthrow*, and the like plays, through an entire absence of both taste and judgment, pay that respect to the number of syllables and jingle of rhimes, which the sense pines for want of.

When we propose to these people to pay more respect to the connexion of ideas and closes of the sense, than to that sound and measure which these have been forc'd into ; we do not mean that it is an invariable law that they are never to stop at the end of a line : we are very sensible that it is not only convenient and proper, but necessary. The poet has frequently closed his sense so, and we have daily opportunities of observing, even in Mr. *Quin*, who hates the jingling tag of an act in comedy as much as any man can do, that tho' the rhyme may often be sunk, yet it cannot be always so.

In tragedies where the lines do not rhyme, the poet is often blameable for forcing a sort of monotony upon the performer which he can no way avoid : when the author carefully delivers a sentence in every line ; and brings the sense to a period with every tenth syllable, the actor is in a manner compell'd to deliver whole speeches in the same tone and cadence, and to make a sort of recitative of it, tho' a very inharmonious one. Perhaps there is not a fault in the whole compass of the player's sphere more difficultly avoided than this ; the best rule we can give for the preventing it, is, to observe the conduct of Mr. *Garrick* in the like circumstances : in some of the characters which he is not a little fond of, there is this sort of prescription for monotony in many places ; every verse is a sentence, and every one seems to require to be spoken with the same pause at its end ; but with what address and caution does this masterly player avoid the snare ? he lengthens or shortens the pause at every period, according to the circumstances, so that the rests are too much varied from one another to affect the ear as the same thing :

thing: he delivers an equal number of syllables in two succeeding lines in very unequal time; and while he gives a more than common force to such passages as will bear it, he delivers others of more familiar import with a naked simplicity, which, tho' the very reverse of that pomp we generally expect in tragedy, is not less just or affecting. In this conduct of Mr. *Garrick* there is a lesson for the players of succeeding ages, for raising the charms of variety on the most barren parts of their author, and for making every thing please: we say, to the players of succeeding ages; for those of the present find it much easier to admire than imitate the models we have proposed to them to form themselves by.

We are not to close this article of monotony without doing the same sort of justice to the other great player of the age, Mr. *Quin*, that we have here done to Mr. *Garrick*; it is the more peculiarly necessary in this part, because this master in the art has been accused by many people of this very fault. We are fond of finding blemishes in the brightest characters, and the love of defamation at present runs so high among us, that we seem incapable of throwing it off, even tho' we are to purchase it at the expence of our own reputation. Let a man mention the name of Mr. *Quin* in company in the manner in which that name deserves to be mentioned, and 'tis more than ten thousand to one but the succeeding sentence, let who will utter it, has the word *Monotony* in it: we are apt to believe, however, that the people who accuse this gentleman of this fault, are not well acquainted with what it is: we have here established three kinds of it, a distinction which they perhaps had not thought of; yet, we

declare Mr. *Quin* to be no more guilty of any one of them, than Mr. *Garrick* or Mr. *Barry*.

If these people mean that Mr. *Quin* is always Mr. *Quin* and never Mr. *Garrick*, or that Mr. *Garrick* is always Mr. *Garrick* and never Mr. *Quin*, we agree with them that they both certainly have so much monotony; they have each, as every man else has, a peculiar tone of voice, which neither of them will ever be able to throw off, or to assume that of the other in its place: but if they mean that Mr. *Quin* pronounces different sentiments with the same cadence, nothing was ever more unjust or ungrateful.

We have taken upon us, thro' the course of this work, the part of a wholly impartial and unprejudic'd judge, and as such cannot but deliver it as our opinion, that Mr. *Quin* is the player, who, of all we at present know or can remember to have seen, has the most variety: if it is observ'd, that thro' the whole part of *Cato* he has a sort of sameness in his manner and delivery, we readily acknowlege it: we doubt not but this, tho' ascrib'd to him as a fault, has been a more labour'd thing than the greatest variety that we see either in him or in any body else, in any part that requires it; and we esteem it a much greater beauty.

Let us remember what *Cato* was, and we shall not blame the actor who represents him for not changing with every circumstance. A great part of the character in *Tamerlane* is of the same kind, and we see this excellent player in all that part keep up the same sort of equality in his voice and manner; but let those who have not judgment



ment enough to distinguish between faults and beauties, and who condemn this as of the first kind, observe with how much prudence he changes his manner, when in this part he feels the impressions of a growing love, or a growing anger, both which, tho' he suppresses in time, yet he first shews the effects of; and they will acknowledge that his variety in these parts of the character, shew, that he could have used the same sort of charm every where else in it if he pleas'd.

This is then throwing the blame upon the judgment of Mr. *Quin*, not upon his natural qualifications; and when we find that the people who make the objection have more judgment in playing than the person they censure, we shall believe there may be something in the accusation.

If to keep up the spirit of a character, not only by the look, gesture, and manner, but even by the tone of voice, where there is no contrary indication from the passions, be to fall into the crime of *monotony*, we do allow Mr. *Quin* to be guilty of it in the highest degree; but if the varying the voice and deportment as often as the change of sentiments, of circumstances, or of persons require it, be to be various as much as a player ought to be, we cannot but give him this praise, and congratulate ourselves that he is no more so.

We readily acknowledge that where the author has thought proper to put a chain of sentences of the same kind into the mouth of that player, he delivers them in the same manner; we own it, and we praise him for it; nay, we have ventur'd to blame some of the greatest actors of the age for affecting to do otherwise: when the same

speech requires variety, or where the different parts of the same character give us the representation of different passions, who is, we will not say more vary'd, but who is so much, so very different from himself as this performer?

If he is thus full of variety where necessary in the several parts of the same character, how vastly more so is he in the different characters he plays! These plead loudly against this charge of monotony as a natural imperfection in him, as they are as various as can be selected from the whole compass of our dramatic writings. Will any man suppose that the player has a natural and unalterable sameness in his voice and manner who performs two so different parts as those of *Cato* and Sir *John Falstaff*, and both equally well; both so well, that the greatest players of the age have never dar'd to put themselves upon the comparison with him in either of them.

If any one suspect Mr. *Quin* of too much sameness in his manner in *Cato*, let them suspend their judgment till they have seen him in *Jaques*; let them attend to his description of the fool:

A fool, a fool, I met a fool i'th' forest,  
As I do live by food, a motley fool,  
Who laid him down and bask'd him in the sun,  
And rail'd at Lady *Fortune* in good terms,  
In good set terms, and yet a motley fool.

Good-morrow, fool, quoth I.—No, sir,  
quoth he,  
Call me not fool till heaven hath sent me fortune:

And then he drew a dial from his poak,  
And, looking on it with lack-lustre eye,  
Says very gravely, It is ten o'clock.

Thus

Thus may we see, quoth he, how the world  
wags;

'Tis but an hour ago that it was nine,  
And in another hour 'twill be eleven;  
And so from hour to hour we ripe and ripe,  
And then from hour to hour we rot and rot,  
And thereby hangs a tale.—When I did hear  
The motley fool thus moral on the time,  
My lungs began to crow like chanticleer,  
That fools should be so deep contemplative;  
And I did laugh sans intermission  
An hour by his dial. O noble fool!  
O worthy fool! motley's the only ware.

Every body that is free from prejudice will allow that there is more variety in Mr. *Quin's* speaking this, than any player we are able to remember ever gave his audience in barely telling a story, for this is no more; tho' so well given by the poet, and so happily deliver'd by this player, that it gives us a greater variety of pleasure than we find almost any where in the same number of lines.

The part we are mentioning abounds with beauties; and this actor does not fail to give them all their true lustre. To give an additional instance from the same play, let us call to mind his manner of delivering that never too often to be repeated description of the several stages of human life:

All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players;  
They have their exits and their entrances,  
And each man in his time plays many parts,  
His acts being seven ages.—At first the infant,  
Mewling

Mewling and puking in its nurse's arms.  
 And then the whining school-boy with his satchel,  
 And shining morning face, creeping like snail  
 Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,  
 Sighing like furnace with a doleful ballad  
 Made to his mistress' eye-brow. Then a soldier,  
 Full of strange oaths and bearded like a pard,  
 Jealous in honour, sudden, quick in quarrel,  
 Seeking the bubble reputation  
 Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the  
     justice,  
 In fair round belly with good capon lin'd,  
 Full of wise saws and modern instances,  
 And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts  
 Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,  
 With spectacles on nose, and pouch at side,  
 His youthful hose, well sav'd, a world too wide  
 For his shrunk shanks; and his big manly voice,  
 Turning again toward childish treble pipes,  
 And whistles in the sound. Last scene of all,  
 That ends this sad eventful history,  
 Is second childishness, and mere oblivion,  
 Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans every  
     thing.

Whoever remembers his speaking this, remembers one of the greatest things ever executed upon the stage: the masterly manner in which he throws off the measure in these lines has no small merit; but the inimitable beauty with which he delivers the several parts is such as one would think must have sham'd every body out of the charge of monotony against him, and establish'd him as the standard of true and rational variety.



If there can be thought to be any occasion for a farther instance of this beauty in this great player, let us remember him in the *Spanish Fryar*, and recollect the change of his tone and accent, while he is threatening the *Colonel*, and when the palliating purse of guineas has been drop'd before him; or when we have thought of his *Othello*, let us remember his *Sir John Falstaff*: with what inimitable spirit, humour, and variety, does he deliver that excellent account *Shakespeare* has given of his soldiers,

“ If I be not asham'd of my soldiers I am a fowls'd gurnet; I misus'd the king's press-money most damnably: I have got, in exchange for an hundred and fifty soldiers, three hundred and odd pounds. I press me none but good house-holders, yeomen's sons: enquire me out contracted batchellors, such as have been ask'd twice on the banns, such a commodity of warm slaves, who had as lieve hear the devil as a drum, such as fear the report of a culverin worse than a struck fowl or a hurt wild-duck; I press me none but such toasts and butter, with hearts in their bellies no bigger than pins heads; and they have bought out their services, and now my whole charge consists of antients, corporals, lieutenants, and gentlemen of companies, slaves as ragged as *Lazarus* in the painted cloth, where the glutton's dogs lick'd his sores; such as indeed were never soldiers, but discarded serving men, younger sons to younger brothers, unjust tapsters and ostlers trade-fallen, the calm cankers of a quiet world and long peace, ten times more dishonourably ragged than an old-fac'd antient; such have I to fill up the rooms of such as have bought out their services.

You wou'd think I had an hundred and fifty tatter'd prodigals juſt come from ſwine-keeping ; from eating draff and huſks. A mad fellow met me on the way and told me, I had been unloading all the gibbets and had prefs'd the dead bodies. No eye hath ſeen ſuch ſcare-crows—I'll not march with them thro' *Coventry*, that's flat : nay, and the villains march wide betwixt the legs as if they had gyves on, for indeed I had the moſt of them out of priſon——. There's but a ſhirt and a half in my whole company, and the half ſhirt is two napkins tack'd together, and thrown over the ſhoulders like a herald's coat without ſleeves : and the ſhirt, to ſay truth, was ſtolen from the hoſt at St. *Alban's*, or the reduc'd innkeeper of *Daintry* ; but that's all one, they'll find linen enough on every hedge."

Never was there more room for humour and variety in the player than in this famous ſpeech, and never was there ſo much of either ſhewn in it as by the perſon we are celebrating in this part. We wiſh the charge of ſameneſs in deportment in all characters, which ſome are apt to lay againſt another great player, could as juſtly or as eaſily be got over as the injudicious charge of monotony againſt Mr. *Quin* is by theſe, and might be by a thouſand other inſtances.

We are alſo to reckon, among the number of the cauſes of falſe recitation, or a vicious delivery in our actors, the reigning paſſion that moſt of them have for ſome particular manner of playing : if they ſuppoſe they have merit in any one thing, they will not reſt till they introduce that ſort of merit into every part, even into things the moſt oppoſite and contradictory : if they have been told  
they

they pronounced their sentences well in one speech, they will be sure to pronounce every speech in the same manner, be the substance or sense of it ever so different from that of the first. We have at present an actress among us who has the secret of affecting an audience beyond most people, in places where the poet has meant to touch them to the heart, with the distress of the character she plays; she is not contented with this praise when she has room to deserve it, but will be attempting to make every passage she speaks, even the most indifferent, moving and affecting; and because she has been told that there is a peculiar beauty in her manner of shedding tears, she would, by her own good will, be always crying.

Every tender passage appears to her to be the same thing, of whatever character it makes a part; and we have the mortification to find the mischief spreading wide among the rest of the people of the same house. Whoever has of late attended the tragedies there, cannot but have perceived that the men are getting into the same melancholy turn. 'Tis in vain that the poets have made tendernesses of a thousand kinds, they have but one manner of expressing them all; they shew only the softness and distress of their part, when there is requir'd a force and dignity, even in the sorrow that is confessed in it; they are waiving their sighs to us, when they ought to be expressing the severest transports of their rage and vengeance, together with their grief; and they lament and bemoan themselves like shepherds who have lost a lamb, when the poet meant that they should grieve like exil'd kings, whose subjects suffered under usurping tyrants.

Others

Others we have among the actors of some credit and character at present, who have a great deal of feeling coupled with very little judgment, and who consequently can never find the art of moderating, with any degree of propriety, the emotions which the redundancy of this good quality throws them into. The actors of this sort are frequently very severely blam'd for faults which the excess only of what is right in itself occasion in them: they are ever carrying too far the expression of the principal passion they are to feel; they employ all that vehemence and ardour, which is necessary and laudable in the more interesting parts of the character, into every scene tho' ever so indifferent; and sacrifice truth and reason, in an idle hope of giving an unnatural energy to their acting.

However violent the love of *Torriſmond* may be for the fair *Leonora*, that heroine, when speaking to his friends and confidants, tho' he has occasion to mention his passion to them, is not to raise himself to all that transport and energy which it is proper he should use when speaking to the queen of *Arragon*, or when avowing his love in the face of his insolent and haughty rival.

The highest instance which perhaps the world ever saw of the use of that judicious moderation of the passions, according to the variation of the circumstances of the part, (the want of which we have so much reason to lament on the *English* stage,) was that which some years ago charm'd the *French* audiences for a long succession of nights, in the character of *Penelope*.

There is no doubt but a settled melancholy ought to be a peculiar characteristic of that distressed princess; she is very judiciously thrown by  
the



the author into a state of sorrow till the very hour of *Ulysses's* return ; yet, as the circumstances of her misfortunes differ in the several parts of the play, the judicious actress who perform'd this favourite part perceived that there might be great merit in moderating her griefs insensibly, as the occasions of them lessen'd. The nearer that play approaches toward a conclusion, the more the terrors of *Penelope* abate, and the more her sorrow ought to abate also : in the first act she has the absence of a husband and that of an only son to lament ; but in the second, her son is restor'd to her ; and, soon after the return of *Telemachus*, she receives certain information that *Ulysses* himself is also living ; her grief therefore is to diminish all the way as the causes of it are taken off ; and, in fine, it is not to be supposed that her despair should express itself in the same manner when she has nothing to fear but the infidelity of her husband, as when she supposed him dead.

The younger players are more apt to be guilty of the fault we have been mentioning, as opposite to this excellence, than those who better understand their profession ; but even these latter very often fall into one that is little less absurd ; that is, when there is any affecting circumstance that concerns the character they represent, they do not take the pains to regulate the sensation they have of it, by the nature of the character that is supposed to feel it, but give us, instead of that, the manner in which themselves would have felt it.

The character of *Marcia* in *Cato*, tho' a very fine one as deliver'd from the hands of the author, has been very seldom represented to us in its native beauty ; the actresses have not felt the different  
emoti-

emotions of love of their admirer and love of their country, as *Cato's* daughter would have felt them, but as themselves would ; and have therefore miss'd all the noble struggles that the author has painted to us between those two passions : some who have represented this character have given up wholly to love and tenderness, others to patriotism and the care and concern for the dangers of their country ; the one set have made love wholly triumph over patriotism, which is absurd in the daughter of *Cato* ; and the other have made patriotism wholly triumph over love, which is equally absurd in the mistress of so amiable a prince as *Juba*.

According to their manner of playing, this *Roman* lady is either wholly devoted to love, or else she has no sense of it at all ; and by this means they either make their character a *Roman* without that universal passion, the love of her country, or else an unnaturally frozen mistress, where every passion submits to reason and reflexion : what we see is not the *Marcia* whom *Addison* drew equally virtuous and tender ; distracted at the thought of the approaching ruin of her country, and at the same time pining for a lover with all the merit she could wish to find in man ; at a time when to indulge a passion of that kind were monstrous, when to be happy were to be criminal.

If the play of those actors who are tolerably well acquainted with the nature of their profession is not always just and true, what an infinity of contradictions and absurdities does one observe in the performance of those who are but young upon the stage ; and especially of those who have wanted education, or opportunities of conversing among people in high life, whose charac-

ters alone are like those which they are to represent upon the stage. We have seen an eminent instance of this want of deportment in a young fellow famous for one of the qualities necessary to a player, assurance, and rais'd by that sole merit to the honour of performing *Hamlet* on one of our stages. It will not be necessary to give many instances of the idea this young man had of the deportment of a prince, after we have mention'd that to prepare himself for the famous soliloquy in that character which begins with, *To be, or not to be, that is the question*; at the end of the second line he took occasion to unload one of his nostrils, by blowing it upon the floor, while he held a finger against the other; and after supplying the business of a handkerchief, by wiping that finger on his breeches, went very deliberately on with the speech.

## C H A P. VIII.

*Of the Care that ought to be taken perfectly to implant the Parts of a Play in the Actor's Memory, in order to its being play'd with Truth.*

THE farther we advance in the examination of the art of performing dramatic writings on the stage, the more we find that a spirit of discernment, and a piercing judgment are necessary, among other qualifications, to every person who would become famous in it. We should also remember, at the same time, how faithful, and how manageable the memory of the players ought to be; since it is never to be faulty, or to leave them in want of what to say; nor is it, on the other hand, ever to be suffer'd to be so visibly

sibly prevalent in them, that we perceive its furnishing them with the sentences which we admire as they proceed from their mouths. The great pleasure we have from seeing a play acted, rather than from hearing it read, is owing to the keeping up the illusion, the appearance of a reality in the former circumstance; and that this may be kept up to us by the actor, it is necessary, that what he delivers shou'd seem the result of the occurrences that have occasioned it, not a part of a lesson got by rote, to be repeated to us at proper periods.

It is a very common thing among the *Italian* comedians, in their more ludicrous scenes, to fill up their part with something spoke off hand, and not only unwritten, but even unpremeditated. The gestures with which they accompany this sort of pleasantry, often cheat us into a laugh at a very sorry joke; but yet people see their performances with pleasure: they accept of truth in the place of wit, and are very well contented with knowing that whatever the scene wants in eloquence it has in nature. Tho' we are sensible that there are not quite so many good things said in one of these scenes, as in one of our own more regularly perform'd ones; we cannot but be pleas'd, at the same time, at the height the illusion is kept up to, while we are sensible that it is in a great measure real life, not an imaginary representation of it, that we are attending to.

This crime in actors, if it be one, is not peculiar to that nation; we have had instances of it among ourselves. Our celebrated *Norris* had introduc'd a thousand occasional pleasantries into every one of the ridiculous characters he was famous for playing; and wou'd seldom be prevail'd with



with to take much pains about acting a new part ; he only made himself master of the heads and matter of it, and of the sense of the whole play ; his own genius for drollery supply'd the rest ; and if the author rav'd at the abuse, the audience never fail'd to be pleas'd with it.

We live, 'tis true, in an age of criticism in which nothing of this kind is suffer'd ; but perhaps if some of the modern farces which have been cram'd down our throats had been play'd off in the same manner, the delicacy of these gentlemen wou'd have been full as little shock'd as it has been at the representation of them as they were written.

It is indeed indisputable that the dramatic writings of a man of wit and genius, as they are studied and regular, are infinitely preferable to the impertinent additions that a player can be able to make to them extempore ; but the imperfection of the human memory is one great obstacle to our seeing plays thus regularly compos'd, perform'd with all the advantages we cou'd wish. When an actor's remembrance serves him but imperfectly, he is liable to be confounded and puzzled in the midst of the most interesting scenes ; and even when it serves him faithfully, but that at the expence of infinite labour and difficulty, we continually see the great care of recollecting what he is next to say stamp'd in his forehead, while he is delivering to us what ought to employ his whole attention.

The great care of the player shou'd be to let us see nothing of himself, but every thing of his character, while he is on the stage. We are vex'd to see that Mr. Garrick in *Iago*, in *Othello* ; and in king *Lear*, as well

as in *Abel Drugger*: We wou'd, if it were possible, have the identity, nay the existence of the man sunk upon us in the representation, and have only the General or the Villain, the Monarch or the Fool shewn to us.

How shall an actor be able to succeed in thus hiding himself under the covert of his character, if we continually perceive that he is only repeating to us something that he has before got by rote for that purpose? Nay, to go farther, how is it possible for him even to shew us the actor, while his memory is upon the rack, and his principal attention is employ'd about it?

If the course of the waters destin'd to furnish a fountain by their rise and falls, be stop'd in part, by some obstacle thrown into the pipes thro' which they shou'd have been distributed, the jets and cascades will be able to perform but a very small part of their effect; and in the same manner, if what the actor is to deliver do not occur to him with all that freedom and rapidity that it ought, the finest talents in the world will be of very little use in the embellishing it.

There is in this particular a vast advantage in the having been long accusom'd to the stage, and long practis'd in a part. Indeed without the latter circumstance in some degree assist the player, it is scarce possible for him to succeed well in this great point, of wholly forgetting himself and his own concerns, to give us the hero he represents, unsully'd either with the fears or the awkwardness of the player who represents him.

We have seen the first nights of *Macbeth*, and some other characters which Mr. *Garrick* has afterwards acted with the highest and most deserv'd applause, hurt considerably by his unacquaintance  
with

with the personage, and uncertain memory of the things to be repeated.

On the contrary, how much does *Mr. Ryan* owe to his long familiarity with the parts he plays, in the applause he receives from his manner of executing many of them. An inattention and absence of mind too frequent with him, hurt his reputation in many characters; but where he throws off this indolence, how much the person he represents does he appear in many very capital parts. In the *Prince of Wales*, in the first part of *Henry the Fourth*, every thing is so ready to his memory, and every article of his deportment so perfect in his thoughts, that he is no longer *Mr. Ryan*, but the Prince, as soon as he enters on the character. With how much true spirit, with how great justice to the author, does he repeat his vindication and promise of services to his father, to whom, when he upbraids him with his degenerate vices, and tells him what he expects from them, he answers,

Do not think so, you shall not find it so;  
And heaven forgive them that so much have sway'd  
Your majesty's good thoughts away from me.  
I will redeem all this on *Piercy's* head,  
And in the closing of some glorious day,  
Be bold to tell you that I am your son,  
When I will wear a garment all of blood,  
And stain my favours in a bloody mask;  
Which wash'd away, shall take my shame all  
with it.

And that shall be the day whene'er it lights,  
That this same child of honour and renown,  
This gallant *Hotspur*, this all-prais'd knight,  
And your unthought of *Harry* chance to meet.

L

For

For every honour fitting on his helm,  
 Wou'd they were multitudes, and on my head,  
 My shame's redoubled : For the time will come,  
 That I shall make this *Northern* youth exchange  
 His glorious deeds for my indignities.  
*Piercy* is but my factor, good my lord,  
 T'engrofs up glorious deeds on my behalf,  
 And I will call him to so strict account,  
 That he shall render every glory up,  
 Yea even the slightest reckoning of his time,  
 Or I will tear the treasure from his heart.  
 This in the name of heaven I promise here,  
 The which, if I perform, and do survive,  
 I do beseech your majesty may salve  
 The long grown wounds of my intemperance ;  
 If not, the end of life cancels all bonds,  
 And I will die a hundred thousand deaths,  
 Ere break the smallest parcel of this vow.

The applause the audience always gives this performer on his delivering this speech, is far from being more than he deserves. We see nothing of the player in it : 'Tis nature itself. The contrition, the resolution, the gallantry, and the solemnity express'd in it, all succeed one another as they wou'd do in real life ; and we are ready to believe ourselves carry'd back to old times, and hearing the first sentiments of that noble daring that afterwards carry'd *Harry the Fifth* thro' the conquest of *France*, breathing themselves out of his own full heart.

To return. The matter the player is to deliver, presents itself much too slowly, even when it occurs just at the instant he is to speak it. His memory ought to take in at one instant, not only every thing that he is to say at the present  
 sent



sent moment, but in some degree every thing that he will have to repeat in the whole scene: By this means, and by none but this, he will be able to regulate his gestures and deportment, not only so as to make them proper for the present occasion, but for the conduct of the whole succeeding part of the scene.

We may even go a great deal farther, without exceeding the bounds of justice in this article. The player ought not only to remember in general his own part in the whole scene, nay and in the whole play, but he shou'd remember also, at least in a general way, the parts of the other actors who are, or at any succeeding time are, to be on the stage with him. On almost all occasions, the actor, before he begins to speak, ought to prepare his audience for what he is going to deliver, by some proper action; and the beginning of this action ought, according to the circumstances, to precede the speech by a longer or shorter time.

The players, especially the young ones, have a way of mechanically recollecting when they are to speak next, by getting off, together with their own parts, what they call the *Cues*, that is, the last line of the speech of the person next after whom they are to speak. But when the performer knows no more of what is to be said to him than the last line, it is hardly to be imagin'd that he can give his speech the proper tone at its setting out; and 'tis utterly impossible that he shou'd introduce it with that kind of action we have just now mention'd the necessity of.

## C H A P. IX.

*Containing a Digression concerning certain Articles, which in themselves are foreign to theatrical Representation; yet without which the Truth of acting is never to be arrived at.*

WHEN the players are thoroughly perfect in the remembrance of their parts, and have study'd so carefully their different circumstances, that they are ready to bestow on each that sort of expression which is adapted to it; we find the most necessary appearances are already all prepared to keep up the illusion in the representation, and to persuade us into an opinion of its being a reality. We have nothing now left us then to enquire into, but such things as are independent both of the action and the delivery.

If we wou'd have the representation perfect in its kind, all that now remains, is to join these requisites of the latter kind with those of the first.

If these connections are in some degree necessary to us in plays, they are infinitely more so in the *Italian* operas. The more every appearance of reality is neglected in the very nature of performances, the more necessity there is that the delusion of our senses shou'd take us off from all thoughts of using our reason. This kind of theatrical entertainment invented by the *Italians*, a nation fonder of shew than of reality, and intended to amuse the eyes and to entertain the ears, rather than to affect the heart, to  
rouse

rouse the passions, or in any degree to employ the understanding, keeps up to this day the spirit of its original nature: Even when there have been people who have understood the language, and have insisted upon meaning in the words, it has still been left in possession of all that gewgaw splendour which was intended originally to make sense unnecessary to it; and stage monsters and pompous scenery are yet allow'd among the things of greatest merit in it.

Our imagination is conducted by these kind of theatrical representations from prodigy to prodigy; and at every instant we are expected to prepare ourselves for seeing scenes, each more extraordinary than the last. A magnificent palace changes in a moment into a frightful desert; and in a few minutes more, a shepherd's cottage becomes a majestic temple.

A conjurer in one scene determin'd to plague a couple of unhappy lovers, ransacks all the elements for means to execute his purpose; furies, fiends and discord arise from the gaping ground, which presents all hell to our view; and the next scene shews us *Venus* and *Cupid* attended by the Graces, descending from the clouds to crown the constancy of the tender pair. We are hurry'd to the utmost bounds of imaginary worlds at the shifting of a scene, and are in one moment in the *Idalian* groves, in the next, in caves and grottos at the bottom of the sea, the resort of *Nereids*, and in a third we are seated on the top of *Olympus* in the midst of a council of the gods.

The art of the mechanick and decorator are no less essential in these performances, than the genius of the poet, the skill of the composer, or

the art of the player, to give some sort of appearance at least of a reality to the representation. Our ridiculous pantomimes are as wild in this way as the strangest extravagances of the *Italians* ever were; but excepting these, the theatrical pieces represented on an *English* stage, as they are conformable to nature and to reason, and are destin'd to employ the understanding, and to affect the heart, may easily spare a great deal in pomp and decorations. The probability of the incidents in our plays, the judicious conduct of the several scenes, the force and spirit of the words, and the just play of the actors, often employ the mind so absolutely with us, that the senses have scarce liberty to exert themselves at all; and we are often so pleas'd with the matter of a scene, that we pay no regard to the decorations of the stage on which it is represented.

Notwithstanding that we are in the right to be more indifferent about this article at the play-house than at the opera, yet it cannot but be acknowledg'd it wou'd be much more reasonable that the scenery should always represent at least the place where the action represented is said to be perform'd, than that it should be left at random in this point: And above all things it is absurd and monstrous to admit a part of the audience upon the stage and behind the scenes. This is a piece of folly that had its rise in *France*, and that has been often attempted to be introduced among us, but always with that ill success it deserves. Tho' the avarice of our managers seems very well dispos'd to suffer the stage to be fill'd as well as the boxes in this manner, the indignation of the generality of the audience



audience has never fail'd to express itself too severely against the people who place themselves there, to encourage them to make a practice of doing so.

We readily pardon the abuses of this kind in the particular instance of the benefit nights of favorite players ; paying them the compliment of sacrificing to their interest the appearance of reality, which the play might have without this, but which can never be given it under such circumstances : it might however be wish'd, that even on these occasions, some care were taken in the distribution of these people, and some decency observ'd in the fault: as, that the stage were never crowded till every other part of the house were full ; that even then the people were so dispos'd on it, as to give free passage to the performers in their coming on and going off the stage, and a space sufficient left for the representation ; scarce any one of which particulars is now ever comply'd with.

The dresses of the actors is another particular that we are usually as careless about as the scenery in our plays. We shou'd indeed be offend-ed if we saw a person who perform'd the part of a man of rank and quality, act in a plain suit ; but we are very unconcern'd to see an actress, whose part is that of a chambermaid, enter upon the stage in a habit that in real life might be worn by a Dutches. We forget the necessary plainness, that a person of the character and station represented to us ought to appear in, and only say upon the occasion, that *Mrs. Clive* has a great many very good cloaths. The general taste which we have for extravagance in dress, makes us forget the interest

we have in the truth of the representation.

This is another folly which we have imported from *France*, where it is carry'd to so much a greater height than with us, that it is as common for a stranger at first sight to mistake the waiting gentlewoman for the sister of the lady she belongs to, as it is for him to hear the gentlemen in the pit call out to those on the stage, to entreat they will favour them so far as not to stand between them and the performers.

We are no more to expect that the generality of players will ever be brought of their own choice to prefer the dress under which they may best and most naturally affect the heart, to that by which they may charm the eyes, and make the audience believe them to be genteel and clever people, than that the master of the house will of his own motion deny himself the crowns that offer at the stage door, for the sake of representing the play the more naturally to us. Let us at least however desire that the manager will draw his magick circle in each of the openings of the scenes, beyond which the persons admitted behind them may not advance; that they may be kept, in as great a measure as may be, out of our sight; and let us entreat of the players, that they wou'd regulate, as well as they can, their vanity and love of finery, by the nature of the part they are to perform, and not by their native pride make it impossible for us to know what character it is they are playing, unless we are inform'd of it before hand.

One great source of these abuses in the parts of the waiting maids is, that the authors of our farces in general have made persons of that rank the principal characters of the piece, while

while their mistresses have been little better than cyphers. But we are apt to believe that the authors of those pieces, intended that the superiority of character in the servant, shou'd be discover'd in the course of performance, not by the habit; and that the whole wou'd have somewhat more the air of nature, if when they are both to appear often together upon the stage, the maid were at least not better dress'd than the mistress. We are not without instances where the footman is made the heroe of a farce, and his master a mighty insignificant person in it; yet we have never found the absurdity carry'd so high among the men, as to see the *Lying Valet* better dress'd than his master tho' there wou'd be a peculiar contradiction in it in this character, that wou'd never have fail'd of spiriting up an actress to have shewed her judgment by doing it. The men, tho' in general much less blameable than the women on this occasion, yet are not without their errors in it, and those such as greatly hurt the air of probability in the representation. We wou'd entreat of them in general to remember that their parts concern them not only in what we see of them on the stage, but in every thing which we hear passes without, in which they are concern'd. We wou'd not desire things to be carry'd so far indeed on this occasion, as to expect a beau to enter in dirty boots, because he is to mention his having come a journey; but then we wou'd not have an *Orestes* return from the temple, where at the instigation of *Hermione*, he has been causing *Pyrrhus* to be assassinated, without one curl of his peruke out of order. Let the look of reality be kept up; and when the actor tells us

of some dreadful bustle he has been in, we wou'd have him shew some marks of it by the disorder of his person.

The first time that Mr. *Garrick* play'd *Macbeth*, he took occasion in one of his scenes of greatest confusion, to enter upon the stage with his coat and waistcoat both unbutton'd, and with some other discomposures in his dress, that added greatly to the resemblance of nature in that part of his character. He did this however only the first night, and lost, by the omitting it afterwards, all the merit of having done it at all. We are apt to believe that some of his friends who assume to themselves the character of critics on stage performances, advis'd him to omit this striking particular, in the following representations: we have no objection to that gentleman's using the friendship of these people hereafter, but hope he will not any more follow their advice.

We are very sensible of the merit that some of our modern players claim to themselves from their judgment in dressing their characters; and we allow it to be a merit of a higher kind on these occasions, than the world in general are willing to think it. But some late instances on one of the theatres make it necessary that we shou'd remind the people who are so fond of their talents in this way, that the habits of characters on the stage shou'd be proper as well as pretty; and that the actors are not only to dress so as not to offend probability, but they are to be ty'd down as much as painters to the general customs of the world. *Alexander* the great, or *Julius Cæsar*, wou'd appear as mon-



strous to us in bag wigs on the stage as in a picture.

In theatrical entertainments wherein singing is requir'd, we are obliged to overlook a great many improprieties among the performers for the sake of the essential point. A good voice is a thing that falls to the share but of one man in ten thousand; and where we find a person possess'd of that, we are to overlook almost every thing else, when there is musick in his part. This is the case very frequently in our farces, in which we pardon a man's figure being ever so improper for the character he represents, provided he can give the songs of his part in an agreeable manner. On the contrary, when acting only is the business, we are much more rigid in our judgments. We expect that the person and figure of the performer, fix our eyes as soon as we see him; that he be like in shape and every other particular to what we suppose the person he represents to have been; and that nature herself hath given him the first strokes toward his perfection in the character.

We have in a former part of this treatise, occasionally mention'd the general and vague resemblance, which there ought always to be between the original and the copy of it on the stage; but we here enter on the subject of a much more particular and more determinate similarity.

We remember very lately, an excellent actress Mrs. Pritchard, playing the part of *Jane Shore*: She spoke it, as she does every thing else, at least as well as any body cou'd; but we were shock'd in the first scenes, at the face and figure of this actress, under the representation of all

those charms that are so lavishly ascrib'd by the poet to that unfortunate heroine ; and in the conclusion, nothing cou'd be so unnatural as to see that plump and rosy figure endeavouring to present us with a view of the utmost want, and starving.

The best friends of this actress, without remembering the unlucky comparison of her general deportment, and that of Mrs. *Woffington* in this character, will acknowledge that she was put quite out of her way, in being compell'd to do it ; and that even if she cou'd have play'd it better than she did, she wou'd never have been able to have exhibited that image of famine, which the author meant to picture to us in the last scene, where the wretched creature is represented as sinking to death thro' a long want of food.

If the player wou'd have the representation carry with it an entire air of truth, he must be cautious not only to conduct his action and recitation with a strict regard to nature ; but he must never select a character to appear in, which is remarkable for any particular striking singularity which is not in himself. He cannot too frequently remember that the representation of a play is a sort of painting, which owes all its beauty to a close imitation of nature, and that its touches are expected to be even vastly more expressive than those of the pencil : That the more advantages the stage has for the making the illusion perfect, the more perfection we expect to find in it there ; and that it is not enough that the fictions it exposes to our view, seem to bear a resemblance to the events which they are intended to figure to us, but that we expect that resemblance to be so perfect, that we shall be able

able to persuade ourselves that what is in reality but a copy, is an original, and that the very events themselves, and the very persons concern'd in them, are really and truly present before our eyes.

## C H A P. X.

*In which some important Rules are added to the Principles before establish'd, of the Truth of Action and Recitation.*

THE reflexions and observations which are to compose this chapter, naturally arise from the remarks we have already made of the necessity there is of an actor's playing with truth, in order to his playing with applause: this necessity naturally infers that of understanding the several degrees by which the greater emotions are to be rais'd to their due height, and of being able to shade the transitions thro' which he is to run from one to another of them.

The dramatic poet, who is a master of his art, always very carefully hides from the audience the end to which he is making; and the player ought also to regulate his conduct by that of his author, and not to let us perceive what will be the event of the action till we are just upon it: we do not desire to be able to guess beforehand what it is that is reserv'd for our entertainment in the conclusion of the piece; but at the same time it is to be observ'd, that we would not be mislead and deceived by the performer in regard to it.

We are very well satisfy'd with seeing incidents occur which we did not expect; but we are never pleas'd at being made to expect that which is not to happen.

In the tragedy of the *Distress'd Mother* we are judiciously kept in ignorance, by the author, of what is to be the catastrophe, 'till we arrive at it. We see indeed thro' the conduct of the whole play that *Pyrrhus* will not marry *Hermione*; but we do not foresee that he will be kill'd in the temple, or that the distress'd *Andromache* will be made happy. Tho' we have no expectation of this, we are not at all displeas'd with seeing it happen; but we should have been violently displeas'd, if, after all that is hinted to us to the contrary, *Pyrrhus* should have marry'd *Hermione*, and sacrific'd both the widow and her son; the former to the resentments of her rival, and the other to those of *Greece*.

'Tis true that the author has in this case so carefully and judiciously kept up the character and manners of his hero, that we see plainly enough what will not be the end, tho' we do not see what will be so: but it is in vain that the poet takes all the care in the world to do this, if the actor does not enter into the spirit of it, and keep up his part in it.

*Pyrrhus* is one of the characters in which Mr. *Quin* has been accus'd of *monotony*, and his enemies have censur'd him also as wanting vehemence in many of the speeches of it, when he says to *Andromache*, who is terrify'd to death at the news of her son's life being demanded by the *Greeks*,

Dry up those tears, I must not see you weep,  
 And know I have rejected their demands;  
 The *Greeks* already threaten me with war,  
 But should they arm, as once they did for *Helen*,  
 And hide the *Adriatick* with their fleets;  
Should



Should they prepare a second ten years siege,  
 And lay my towns and palaces in dust,  
 I am determin'd to defend your son,  
 And rather die myself than give him up.

But, madam, in the midst of all these dangers,  
 Will you refuse me a propitious smile?  
 Hated of *Greece*, and press'd on every side,  
 Let me not, madam, while I fight your cause,  
 Let me not combat with your cruelties,  
 And count *Andromache* amongst my foes.

And when he afterwards, on the coldness of  
 her reply to this, goes on,

Will your resentment then endure for ever?  
 Must *Pyrrhus* never be forgiven?—'Tis true  
 My sword has often reak'd in *Phrygian* blood,  
 And carry'd havock thro' your royal kindred;  
 But you, fair princess, amply have aveng'd  
 Old *Priam's* vanquish'd house!

It has been objected to him that he robs these  
 speeches of half their beauty, by not giving them  
 more fire; but let us consider that the events  
 of a hero's actions are only to be judg'd of by his  
 temper. Constancy of mind is one of the great  
 characteristics of this part, and is that which  
 makes us foresee that he will not forsake the  
 interests of *Andromache*. Should an actor of less  
 judgment throw all that violence into these speeches  
 that such half judges seem to require, he would  
 destroy that character which the poet had so art-  
 fully preserv'd in every sentence, and on which  
 the probability of the whole play depends; we  
 should naturally expect that the continued refusal  
 of

of *Andromache* would throw a man of his violent temper into the arms of *Hermione* in mere revenge, and should blame the author for deviating from probability in keeping up to the constancy of his love to the *Trojan* captive.

## C H A P. XI.

*Of natural Playing.*

**I**T is not impossible that the performance of an (actor, tho' it be regularly adjusted to the greater part of the rules hitherto laid down, nay, tho' it take in the greater part of the conditions which have been mention'd as necessary to perfection, and in consequence of all this, have the principal characters on which the truth both in action and recitation depend,) may yet not be natural.

It will be perhaps demanded, after this assertion, whether it be always necessary that a theatrical representation be natural? and this is a question which stands in need of some explanation:

If we are to understand by natural playing that only which has not an air of constraint and trouble to the player, then every actor in the world, whether his part for the night requires a simple and unaffected manner, or whatever other, is under a necessity as far as he can to play naturally. But even in this determination we must use a caution in distinguishing, and must not confound negligent and careless with easy and unaffected playing; the latter, tho' it does not express any study or labour to the eye, is yet always the effect of a great deal of both; the former is the effect of an insolent indolence, and is an affront upon the understandings of an audience.

The reason why we sometimes discover the study'd action of the player, is not because he has been at the pains of studying it beforehand, but because he has not study'd it enough: the last touches of his application in this kind, should be those employ'd to conceal that there ever was any labour bestow'd at all upon what he is doing; and the rest, without this, always hurts instead of pleasing us.

Among the several manners of playing with truth and justice, that which is most of all divested of the pomp and ceremony of playing is frequently what has most of all been labour'd by the performers: 'tis in this as in poetry, those pieces which seem to the reader the easiest and most familiar of all, are frequently those which have cost the author the most trouble.

There is not any thing in modern tragedy that has so much the air of nature, of ease, and unaffected plainness in the delivery, as the relation *Pierre* gives to *Jaffier* of the ruin of his affairs, as the justly celebrated player above mention'd delivers it; and yet, perhaps there is not any thing in all the parts he shines in, that has cost him so much study: nothing less than a repeated consideration of every sentence could give him the power to speak as he does,

I pass'd this very moment by thy doors,  
And saw them guarded by a troop of villains;  
The sons of public rapine were destroying:  
They told me, by the sentence of the law,  
They had commission to seize all thy fortune;  
Nay more, *Priuli's* cruel hand had sign'd it.

Here stood a ruffian with a horrid face,  
Lording it o'er a pile of massy plate,

Tumbled

Tumbled into a heap for public sale ;  
 There was another making villanous jests  
 At thy undoing ; he had ta'en possession  
 Of all thy antient most domestic ornaments,  
 Rich hangings, intermix'd and wrought with  
                   gold ;  
 'The very bed which on thy wedding night  
 Receiv'd thee to the arms of *Belvidera*,  
 'The scene of all thy joys, was violated  
 By the coarse hands of filthy dungeon villains,  
 And thrown among the common lumber.

We are sensible that Mr. *Garrick* is vastly more the player in this famous speech than the actor we are paying our just praises to in it ; but we are also sensible, that Mr. *Quin* is vastly more the man : Mr. *Garrick*'s fire loses its end ; and to a judicious observer he will appear to be employing his whole thought upon the bare delivery of the words : Mr. *Quin* shews a vastly deeper thought in the scene, and while we see in him the man himself, the very friend of *Jaffier*, curbing that spirit which seems in the other but a sort of triumph over the misfortunes of the person, this actor pities in every look, every accent : we see farther, that he means more by this relation than the bare news of it, and expects the purpose he afterwards shews he intended it to serve.

If we allow this in regard to the pronouncing this speech, how much more superiority are we to acknowledge on Mr. *Quin*'s part in the succeeding one,

Curse thy dull stars, and the worst fate of *Venice*,  
 Where brothers, friends, and fathers, all are  
                   false ;

Where



Where there's no faith, no truth ; where innocence.

Stoops under vile oppression, and vice lords it.

Hadst thou but seen, as I did, how at last  
Thy beauteous *Belvidera*, like a wretch  
That's doom'd to banishment, came weeping  
forth,

Shining thro' tears like April suns thro' showers,  
That labour to o'ercome the cloud that loads  
them ;

While two young virgins, on whose arms she  
lean'd,

Kindly look'd up, and at her grief grew sad,  
As if they catch'd the sorrows that fell from her !  
Ev'n the lewd rabble that were gather'd round  
To see the sight, stood mute when they beheld  
her,

Govern'd their roaring throats, and grumbled  
pity ;

I could have hugg'd the greasy rogues, they  
pleas'd me.

Here the intent and drift of the revengeful *Pierre* appears more strongly than before, yet all under the cloak of plainness and simplicity of speaking ; we even are ready to grudge him the praise he extorts from us, as if we thought he did not take pains enough to deserve it.

Those parts in our comedies which require in the player an air of artlessness and simplicity, are in regard to the others, much what the minuet in dancing is to the high capering of some of our modern favourites on the stage ; the latter throws the body into attitudes which the former will by no means bear, and gives a force and violence to the steps which almost hurts the spectator ; but the  
other

other is not to be acquir'd without at least as much study and practice; and even the highest strokes of the former, when most judiciously perform'd, ought not to discover the labour with which they are executed. Indeed the most violent parts in a play never perfectly please, unless where they seem to flow from the nature of the circumstance, not from the constraint the performer lays himself under to execute them; as the comic dancer never gives us perfect satisfaction unless when he seems as easy in performing his most difficult strokes, as a common performer in that way, is in his minuet steps.

If we chuse to understand the term *natural*, when apply'd to playing, in a larger sense, and to express by it an exact imitation of nature, as it appears in common in the world, we shall not scruple to affirm, that there are many cases in which a player would appear lifeless, spiritless, and insipid, by playing naturally.

In the first place, there are a great many comic characters in which the actor approaches the nearer to the truth of playing, that is, to the expressing exactly what the author means, as he employs more of a certain set of extraordinary affectations which are the distinguishing peculiarities of the character he performs. The part of *Clincher* in the *Trip to the Jubilee*, is evidently of this kind; and a man can never act it well who does not very widely depart from natural playing, in this last sense of the word.

We may also observe, that the actor sometimes cannot, nay ought not, to give in his playing the full *force* that the nature of the passage he delivers may seem to require. This is a proposition that will probably appear odd at first sight to  
some

some of our readers, but perhaps it will have more the appearance of reason, after the following observations have been attended to.

## O B S E R V A T I O N I.

We use the word *force* very improperly, when we apply it, as is frequently done, to the too great vehemence of the declamation of an actor in tragedy. When a painter, in a piece wherein he means to affect the passions, carries the extravagance of his fancy so far as to make his figures have an air of grimace, we should express ourselves very improperly if we say he has given great *force* to them; we should deliver our sense of the performance in much more adequate words, if we say he has very ill design'd what he intended to express. When an actor in tragedy, in order to play his part in a pathetic and affecting manner, takes up the violence of a madman, we ought not to say that he plays his part with a great deal of strength and *force*, but that he plays a different part from that which the author laid down for him.

*Force* in the author is the same thing as strong expression in the painter, and the caricature is no more to be universal in the business of the one than of the other; 'tis an excess which is sometimes indeed to be permitted, either to make one'sself merry, or to raise a laugh in others; but it is not to be exerted in every piece. A painter in a flight of fancy, traces a grotesque figure of a man, and loads it with a hump on the back greater than ever nature burthen'd any body with; we may be very well pleas'd with the extravagance of such a piece as this for once, but we  
could

could never applaud a painter who in all his pictures exaggerated in the same manner : thus we are pleas'd to see an actor in comedy carry certain characters up to an immoderate height to make us laugh, tho' we would by no means wish to see him serve every thing else in the same way.

## O B S E R V A T I O N . II.

'The employing this exaggerating force is therefore to be allow'd to the actor in comedy, but only under certain restrictions and regulations.

'Tis only upon certain conditions that a judicious audience will be pleas'd with it : they will require even that it is extravagant, as it were within the bounds of moderation, and that it keep up a kind of regularity even in its utmost wildness. We are very well satisfied that a painter, influenc'd by a joyous frenzy, should give us a figure for instance with an excessively long nose ; but we expect at the same time that this nose should have the shape and figure of other noses that we are acquainted with, and that it be situated in that part of the face which nature assigns for this feature : and we are in the same manner willing that the comic actor should sometimes carry his mimicry farther than nature ordinarily allows herself to go ; but we are not pleas'd if, under the notion of giving us extremely comic figures, he exhibits monsters to us : the painter and the player have both a privilege of enlarging and heightening objects within the limits of discretion, but they are not to exaggerate  
them



them in such a manner that one cannot know them.

The actor in comedy will not only find it necessary to curb the luxuriancy of his genius in this heightening of objects, but he will often be oblig'd even to use many precautions when he has confin'd himself within reasonable bounds, before he ventures to lay on the charge.

Any thing considerable of this kind never succeeds but when the player has beforehand preparatorily led his audience up to a pitch of enthusiasm, in which they will not be able to judge of things with the same severity that they would have done in cool blood.

We have observ'd that this *force* in playing is an exaggeration wholly to be dictated by a pleasantry of disposition; it is like those liberties which we allow ourselves in conversation, where we speak with freedom. A thousand extravagancies which a man of prudence would never venture to throw out, if he were conscious that he was heard by sober and sedate people, yet pass off with high applause in companies where noisy mirth and jollity are on foot.

There are several tones and gestures used in these exaggerations by the players, that would appear absurd and preposterous if we examin'd them with a strict reflection, which yet please us greatly when we suffer them to pass without scrutiny.

Besides these two cautions in regard to the player's applying this extraordinary force, there are yet two others that must necessarily be observ'd to give it any pretensions to succeed; these are, that it be not too frequently repeated, and that it be never improperly plac'd.

As

As this kind of heightening is only to be permitted on certain conditions, so there are also some peculiar circumstances under which alone it can be properly apply'd : in general, it can never justly have place in any of those characters which make what we rightly enough call those of genteel comedy ; and above all things, it is unpardonable in those which the author means should interest our passions in favour of their designs : in all the other parts of comedy it may be made agreeable, and it often is necessary.

Of all the comedians on the present stage, the greatest applause is due to Mr. *Woodward* on this account ; the heightening he gives to the character of *Trappolin* in the *Duke and no Duke*, has a greater effect than most things of this kind. In the part of *Brass* in the *Confederacy*, he is excellent in a judicious and well-temper'd use of it ; but the character that ought to make him famous for ever in this respect, is *Mercutio* in *Romeo and Juliet*.

This is really a comic character, tho' introduced in tragedy, and is of the number of those where an exaggeration of this kind is allowable, according to the strictest rules, because he is not the principal character of the play, nor are we much interested about him : we look upon him as a merry fellow who has drop'd into grave company by chance, and therefore he may without absurdity stretch his faculties to entertain us.

To this lucky circumstance we are to add, that *Shakespeare* has happily thrown into his part one of the boldest, wildest, and most extravagant flights of fancy that he was ever author of : here are circumstances under which the player is at full liberty to throw in all the force he can, and under which no man but the actor we are commending could

could ever throw in enough. With what infinite strength does he run thro' the famous speech,

O, then I see Queen *Mab* has been with him ;  
She is the fairy's midwife ; and she comes,  
In size no bigger than an agat stone  
On the fore finger of an alderman,  
Drawn by a team of little atomies  
Athwart mens noses as they lie asleep.

Her waggon spokes made of long spinner's  
legs ;

The cover, of the wings of grafshoppers ;  
The traces, of the smallest spider's web ;  
The collars, of the moonshine's watery beams ;  
Her whip of cricket's bone, the lash of film ;  
Her waggoner a small grey-coated gnat,  
Not half so big as a round little worm  
Prick'd from the lazy finger of a maid.

Her chariot is an empty hazle nut,  
Made by the joyner squirrel, or old grub,  
Time out of mind, the fairies coachmakers.

And in this state she gallops night by night  
Thro' lovers brains,——and then they dream of  
love ;

On courtiers knees that dream on court'sies strait,  
O'er doctors fingers who strait dream of fees,  
O'er ladies lips who strait of kisses dream,  
Which oft the angry *Mab* blisters with plagues,  
Because their breaths with sweet-meats tainted  
are.

Sometimes she gallops o'er a lawyer's nose,  
And then hedreams of smelling out a suit :  
And sometimes comes she with a tythe pig's tail,  
Tickling the parson as he lies asleep,  
Then dreams he of another benefice.

It is not more certain that none but *Shakespear* could have wrote this speech, than that no man but *Woodward* can speak it.

Does the plot of a comedy require that the valets or chambermaids who have parts in it should put on the airs of people of condition? In this case, provided that the actor or actresses do not carry the exaggeration to such an excess that it is absurd to imagine the people they mean to impose upon should not see the cheat, the heightening up the whole renders it greatly the more agreeable.

It may be worth enquiring, why it is that we readily allow, and even generally approve, of a comic actor's burlesquing the character he performs, by carrying it extravagantly above its true rank in real life, and yet never suffer him, without imputation of a fault, to turn his part into travesty, by throwing it into something under the proper dignity? It may be answer'd, that a man of condition degrades himself in some degree by putting on the disguise of a person of lower rank, and we are by no means willing that the actor make himself still lower by appearing to be particularly pleas'd with the change: there is always danger of the character's being suspected of being really the low thing it affects to appear, if the player carries the dissimulation the least jot farther than is necessary to the keeping up the plot: these are plausible reasons why we are always hurt when we see the player in the character of a gentleman use his art of exaggeration in descending to the level of the meaner rank of mankind; but it is much otherwise in the case where the heightening is employ'd in adding a greatness and consequence to the character that  
does



does not naturally belong to it. A person of the common rank always gains upon us, by aiming at high things, and expressing an emulation to aspire to the manner of people above him ; and, as the utmost he is ever able to arrive at can be only a very imperfect copy of what he would imitate, we have the additional pleasure of seeing the absurdity and vanity of his attempts, while we are laughing at the folly of the people on whom he is imposing for not seeing thro' the cheat.

There are some parts in playing of which the heightening of the character is not only agreeable to the audience, but is even absolutely necessary. It would be too tedious to the reader to enumerate characters in which this sort of exaggeration is expected by every body ; we shall only observe, that we are to count among these all those which are copies of originals that are not known, such, for instance, as *Crispin* in the *Anatomist* ; those in which the author has intended to copy some real character, but has given himself so great liberties in the doing it that it is a travestie or burlesque upon the original, not a genuine representation of it ; and in fine, those in which he has given to a good portrait some additional and very strong touches ; such is that of the *Miser*, which no man will ever play tolerably who does not boldly exaggerate upon all that he ever saw of reality, in the manner of his performing it.

The judicious player will always swell out his voice, and be very free with his gestures in the principal parts of the characters of the first and second sort that we have mention'd, because they are in them selves heightenings upon nature ; and

he will do the same in those of the third kind, because it is his business to amuse and confound the spectators with noise, that they may not be at liberty to examine whether the author has not now and then exceeded the bounds of probability. The tone of voice in which the same form of words may be spoken, is always capable of giving them very different meanings; and it is in the actor's power to save the author many a censure upon the stage, which he would receive from those who read his play coolly and sedately in their closets.

We have a famous instance of this in the character of the *Miser* just mentioned: if the old gentleman is represented in cool blood examining the two hands of his son's servant, and when he has search'd both, demanding to see his other hand; if this we observe to be done in cool blood, there will appear great justice in the censure of the critics, who condemn *Moliere* for having copied *Plautus* in so absurd and monstrous an extravagance: but the actor is to blame if this be the case: if he play the part as he ought, and heighten the confusion of a covetous old fellow, rob'd of his treasure, up to a madness that will not give him leave to know whether a man has two hands or three, we shall find no room to make such a criticism; but shall have an excellent answer to those who know so little of the stage as to blame a writer for what is absolutely the fault of an actor.

## O B S E R V A T I O N III.

The preceeding observation may serve to convince many people who are very free with their criticisms, that they often condemn an author merely because they either will not or cannot enter into a true examination of the passage that offends them; we are apt to believe that many who esteem themselves great judges of playing, mistake the matter so far as to think every exaggeration, every heightening of a part by the performer, a fault; but it is evident from these, among a thousand other familiar instances, that it is very often a merit in the player, and not unfrequently is of absolute necessity.

Notwithstanding all the truth and reason however which there is on the side of the heightening some characters occasionally as they require it, the world will never be brought to judge candidly of some of the modern players who practise it. An actor perhaps is famous in the parts of footmen of spirit; he gives boldly into the taste for heightening his characters; but those he employs his talents upon are, unluckily for him, improper subjects for exaggeration: we see thro' the impropriety, and tho' we are entertained with him while he is upon the stage, we condemn him for it afterwards. Another performer has the good fortune that he need only shew his face to set us a laughing; he exaggerates every thing greatly beyond the former, yet he escapes our censure; he owes his good luck not to any superior cunning or address in concealing the manner in which he acquires his applause, but merely to the parts he acts. He exaggerates and heigh-

tens things much more frequently than the person who is condemn'd for doing so, but the audience never think of censuring him for it, because the characters he plays are a sort of grotesques, to which a regularity of proportion is not necessary or expected.

## C H A P. XII.

*Of the Finesses in the Art of Playing in general.*

WE have in the whole course of this work taken a particular care not to blend under the general name of an *audience* or *spectators* those who have abilities to judge, those who have taste and discernment, with the multitude: this however is not a sufficient distinction; the spectators of the first kind form several distinct classes among themselves, which ought not to be confounded together: with some of them our understanding judges truly enough of the things that are presented before it, only it is confin'd within certain bounds and limits: it is peculiar to these that they never are able to determine whether what they see is all that they ought to see upon the occasion. In others, a sprightly and fertile imagination accompanies a sound judgment and a clear discernment; these are the hardest of all to please; they are not contented with finding every thing good that is presented before them, but they complain if they have not every thing that they think they had a right to expect.

When an actor performs without blunders, when he throws all the truth and propriety that the nature of his part requires, both into his  
action



action and recitation, and when he does not shew any thing of labour in his expression, or of study'd motion in his deportment, the spectators of the first of these two classes never think of requiring any thing more of him, as they have no ideas of any merit beyond this: but it is much otherwise with the judges of the latter sort; they know that beside all this, a great many more beauties may be thrown in, if the actor be capable of them: before the tribunal of these judges there is understood to be the same difference between that kind of playing which has no farther merit than that of being natural and just, and that which, beside these qualities, has that of being ingenious and delicate; that there is between a treatise written by a man who has knowledge and good sense, with no other qualification for a writer, and that of one who has, added to these, a *genius*.

These nice judges not only expect that a comedian should be a faithful copier of things; to claim a merit with them he must be able even to create; he must know how to contrive and form, as well as express things; and, indeed, in this consists all the delicate and superior merit of the profession.

Whatever wit, whatever judgment an author may have, and however careful he may be to bring his piece to perfection, it never happens that every thing occurs to him that might be proper on the subject, he therefore scarce ever fails of omitting many things that might have given great beauty to the piece. When the performance is in verse the matter is still worse, he is cramp'd from time to time by the measure, and finds an impossibility of throwing in a thou-

and graces that occur to him, because of the necessary regard to his numbers: in this case the omission of a single word, which he finds it impossible to get a place for in the line, frequently obscures a sentence, and a fine idea is by this means lost, at least to two thirds of an audience, unless the actor employs all his talents to discover it.

The player, in these cases, may artfully throw in a monosyllable, where he finds the author would have done it, but could not; and may so modulate the rest of the line, that the measure is not perceived, as he speaks, to be hurt by it, and yet the sentiment is convey'd in its full force to every body: but 'tis only in pieces in verse that the player has opportunity of doing the poet this singular service; in prose 'tis the author's own fault if he wants it. This is one of the superior kinds of merit of the tragic player, and indeed is one of the principal reasons why the best and most judicious persons of a company should have the tragedy parts assign'd them, as they give them opportunities of shewing an audience their judgment and understanding.

The actors of a lower class have no idea that they are to see with any other eyes than those of the author, they never imagine that there is a possibility of adding any thing to what he has said; but those of a superior class should always examine their parts with a discerning eye, and seize upon every remark, every circumstance that had escap'd the author, but would have done him credit if it had occur'd to him, as occasions of merit toward the audience in themselves; whatever is wanting in the dialogue is expected to be added by their play.

The

The author whose piece is to have the principal characters play'd by persons of this class may always venture to omit things, or to express himself but imperfectly, where there may appear sufficient reasons for his doing so, since he will be sure to have a supplement or a commentary as far as the nature of the passage will bear it in the performing. The great thing in which these players distinguish themselves, is the expressing to the audience such sentiments as are not deliver'd in the play, yet are not only agreeable to, but necessary to be understood of the character they represent, under that situation in which it is when they do it. Whoever has seen Mr. *Garrick* play *Iago*, or *Macklin* the *Jew of Venice*, and has before or after read the plays in which those characters make so great a figure, if he be qualified for judging nicely of theatrical representations, will find that there are many instances of this kind of merit in both those representations, which the audience ought, and which the author, if he were alive, would greatly thank the performers for.

In the same manner as the actor may often shew his judgment in saying more than the author has put into his part, he may do it not less in many instances in omitting things that are thrown into it; this however requires the judgment of a very masterly performer to do with a necessary propriety.

It is recorded of Mr. *Mills*, that he long valued himself among his friends for speaking a soliloquy in one of our comedies, which, as he express'd it, poor Mr. *Wilks* never could remember when he acted that part; but he was at length thoroughly mortify'd by being told by a very great

judge of dramatic writing, that there was more merit in Mr. *Wilks's* forgetting that speech than in all that ever *he* had remembered in his life.

Some actors, tho' very capable of entering into the delicacy of all that attention and regard which people of high rank, tho' equal in that point, owe to one another, yet are not able to judge of that which each character owes to itself. The actresses of the present age are apt to want this, and it very frequently falls in our way to lament that they do so.

Familiarity is apt to take off from pomp, and is therefore frequently with some justice condemn'd in tragic playing; but it is not always that the audience have grounds for their censures on this occasion: within these few years tragedy has very justly drop'd so much of its false majesty with us, that we now find many a performer has been condemn'd for that familiarity for which he deserv'd the utmost praises. It is not many years since Mr. *Foot* attempted the character of *Othello*; he play'd it with applause, and tho' not without faults, yet perhaps with more beauties than have been seen in it since; he ow'd much of the peculiar manner in which he spoke many of the more pathetic speeches in this character to the instructions of Mr. *Macklin*, who was then labouring at a scheme which our greatest players have since very judiciously given into, tho' they have not very gratefully acknowledg'd to whom they ow'd it; we mean, that of bringing playing nearer to nature than it us'd to be.

Some of the critics, as they esteem themselves, who were present at the first night of Mr. *Foot's* appearance in the character we have just mention'd,



tion'd, complain'd that tho' he was at least pompous enough in the main, yet in some particular parts he fell from the dignity of tragedy, and gave into too plain a manner of speaking: the instance is too much in every body's memory to render it necessary for us to quote the particular passages for which he was censur'd in this manner; it is sufficient that we say in his vindication, that the audience, or rather this part of the audience, very often condemn'd in him those tones and gestures as too much approaching to familiarity, which had no small share in the making his performance more natural and affecting than that of any man who had ever before been seen in the same character.

Is a tone or a gesture just? are they expressive? and do they not degrade the person who uses them, nor the person to whom they are address'd? let the actor fall boldly then into the use of them, and never fear degrading the majesty of tragedy by it; 'tis only that false majesty which we want to be rid of, not the genuine and native dignity of it, that can be hurt by it. The accomplish'd player does not confine the finesses of his art to the narrow bounds of adding ornaments only to the parts he represents; he is for extending them to the hiding the blemishes that may be in them.

This is indeed the highest merit the address of an actor can arrive at; but this is not easy, nor indeed always possible: Among the faults that a judicious eye discovers even in our best dramatick pieces, there are some which no art can palliate in the representation. Of this kind are obsolete phrases, or such as the custom of the world has now render'd contemptible, tho' in repute at the

time when the author introduc'd them into his work. The player can never palliate or amend such passages; and therefore he ought boldly to leave them out; they are decay'd branches which shou'd be cut off from the yet healthful tree; and the performer may be assur'd, that the judicious part of his audience wou'd rather hear some of the verses shorten'd, nay, wou'd be rather content to have many of them wholly left out, than to see an author whom they reverence, and whose only crime is the having written some time ago, expos'd by them to the senseless raillery of a set of half-witted people about them.

The playhouses swarm with these mighty aristarchs, who, incapable of preserving their attention thro' a whole scene, or of interesting themselves in the business of a play, are easily taken by accidental strokes, and turn'd out of their way by things of ever so little importance. *Shakespear* himself does not escape these criticks, who in the course of a scene as full of true majesty, and as interesting to the soul of every man who is capable of being mov'd, as the world ever produc'd, will lose sight of all the beauties it abounds with, in order to fix their attention upon some trifling imperfection; which, tho' they have not penetration enough to see it, is only such because the times and customs have chang'd since the author wrote it.

*Corneille* amongst the *French*, notwithstanding all his merit, shares the same fate in this respect, that *Beaumont* and *Fletcher*, and the rest who have written about their time, do with us. A play of that author's is never acted, but people who have not sense enough to relish his beauties,  
are

are merry with what they call his defects; and the actors are afraid to perform some of the best pieces in their language, which perhaps is the case with us, as well as with them, merely because there are some passages in them that will not bear the test of the present times, tho' they had even great merit when they were written.

If our players had courage enough to make the necessary alterations in their several parts that the changes of the customs of an age or two require, how many excellent plays might we see reviv'd that now lie dormant; while we in vain complain of wanting variety in our theatres, or what is worse, supply that want with new things, too contemptible for censure.

What shou'd prevent a man of Mr. *Garrick's* judgment both as a player and a manager from reviving some play in which he finds much merit, tho' many imperfections, with all that merit preserv'd, and all those blemishes struck out; instead of forcing upon us pieces which he knows he must despise us for being satisfy'd with. If a line is bad in an old play, let it be struck out; if a dozen lines are bad in the midst of a good speech, let them all be struck out, and let the good part of it be preserv'd. If there are scenes which his discernment knows wou'd please, but which are made languid and tiresome by some long and lifeless speeches, let these be retrench'd, or their whole necessary import be thrown into a few words, and the rest of the scene preserv'd. If he shou'd find the task of preparing a play for the stage in this manner too great for his abilities, or, to give it a softer turn, that it wou'd take up too much of his time, let him employ in it some man of genius and

and modesty, (for he knows there are, to the scandal of the age, enough of these to be found who wou'd be glad of employment) and engage him to perfect and polish up the play throughout; to amend those passages where the sense is so express'd as not to sound well at present, tho' it be necessary that it be preserv'd; to cancel such parts as are least essential and most blameable; and to shorten all the long speeches, since we are not quite so fond of them as our fathers were, by making the person they are address'd to interrupt them in proper places, if but by a single line.

Cou'd the manager we have mentioned be pre-wit to do this, we shou'd have a succession of plays which wou'd be new to us, tho' they have been the admiration of our grandfathers, and which wou'd prevent the complaint of our wanting variety, till another poet shou'd appear capable of writing what is worth our hearing.

It were much to be wish'd that we had some changes made even in many of the tragedies, as well as comedies, that go off at present without any open censure, tho' there are passages in them that always hurt the ear of the judicious part of an audience: these an actor who had as much merit as some of those that play in them, and as much boldness as so much merit might warrant, wou'd generally be able to palliate to us in the representation: A fault in expression must be indeed a very gross one, when a good actor cannot hide it, if he dares employ his utmost art in the doing it.

It frequently happens, tho' not greatly to the credit of the author, that two persons are employ'd in making long speeches to one another, while



while one or more, who are on the stage at the same time, but have no business with what is doing, are at a loss to know what to do with themselves. It is true indeed that the attention of the audience is principally taken up with the persons who are speaking; but it is not to be suppos'd, but that they will take some notice of the others occasionally. Perhaps there is not a more difficult circumstance in playing, than this of standing a long time before an audience with nothing to do. The player is to be very cautious on these occasions, that he does not fall into the error of some of the modern actresses, who shew us on every occasion that their sense of the thing is, that when they have repeated their own part of the dialogue, they have no business with what is going on in the scene; and that while any body else is speaking, they have nothing to do but to cast their eye over the audience to see who admires them most, or to adjust a ruffle or a tucker. The man who is a master of the art of playing will never be idle while he is on the stage. He will employ himself on the business of the scene without the author's instructions, and will find the way of expressing himself to the purpose by dumb shew, where the author has improperly condemn'd him to silence.

On the other hand does it happen that the poet has so conducted the scene, that the speeches made to a performer are not too long, but his own are so; he will shew his judgment greatly in the taking off the tediousness of a tiresome speech, by the rapidity with which he delivers the less expressive part of it, and by the air of consequence which he gives to such passages, as  
whether

whether they in reality deserve all the sound he bestows upon them or not, at least will bear it better than the rest. This last article is one of those on which the actor ought to employ his utmost attention. It is an artifice by which some players of the present age have succeeded to the admiration of an audience, tho' nobody cou'd guess by what means, in passages which had, from the mouths of the very best actors who preceded them, always been us'd to displease.

Among the players possess'd of this happy secret, we ought perhaps to place Mr. *Barry* as the very first. And it is evidently to this, when we examine it closely, that he owes the applause he meets with in the part of *Castalio*, which had always been used to appear, till his time, not the first, but the second, sometimes the third character in the play.

The poet, tho' he has thrown innumerable beauties into this part, has yet made many of the speeches too long, and in most of them some of the lines are vastly inferior to the rest. They had all nevertheless been us'd to be deliver'd in the same tone of voice, and with much the same degree of energy, till this great genius undertook them: It is no wonder an audience grew tir'd under long declamations, many parts of which were at least of so little importance to the subject, that they cou'd not interest them in the recital; but this excellent player, no sooner had cast his eye upon the part, than he plan'd out the method of acquiring reputation in a character which every body else of late had fail'd in, and that as they imagin'd not by their own fault, but by that of the author. He happily added a tenderness to the part that we never saw in it before:

before; and he contriv'd always to pass over the less affecting parts of the longer speeches, and to dwell upon the rest in such a manner as to make it interest us more than even the character of the favourite *Chamont*.

An actor of this judgment, provided the lines are not such that it is impossible to give force or strength to any of them, will find the way to pass lightly over the less affecting, to dwell upon those which are a little superior to the rest, and add a dignity and strength to them, which the author, if he heard him, wou'd own he ought to have given better grounds for.

Every thing grows almost what it ought to have been originally, in the mouth of such a speaker: a false sentiment acquires a sort of justice as he pronounces it; and even an unnatural thought is some way or other forc'd within the bounds of nature.

We may venture, in some sense, to give the name of magick to the performance of such a player; and when the reader considers that it is able to draw from us those tears for fancy'd evils, which we shou'd scarce have shed for real ones; to throw us into sorrow and distress upon the turns of what we know to be only pompous chimeras, and that more sincerely and feelingly than many of us wou'd be affected by them for the same misfortunes, if they happen'd in real life to our nearest friends; he will not perhaps censure us for having given it too lofty an appellation; or if he is inclin'd to do so, let him at least suspend his judgment till he has cast his eye over the new picture we shall draw of it in the succeeding chapter.

Hitherto

Hitherto we have only consider'd the finesses in the art of the player, with regard to what constitutes their essence. We shall now proceed to consider them in another light, in regard to what concerns their different use and application. The finesses in acting are of various kinds. Some of them are wholly appropriated to tragedy, and others wholly to comedy.

## C H A P. XIII.

*Of the Finesses in playing, which peculiarly belong to Tragedy.*

WE determine with great justice and reason, that the business of tragedy is to affect us, and raise the noblest and greatest emotions in our hearts. It is too natural for the generality of the world to conclude from this, that the performers in this species of the drama, ought continually to give themselves up to the most powerful emotions of this kind. The generality of an audience really think so; and applause is given accordingly: But they who think so are in the wrong; and the approbation is ill apply'd.

It is often the true business of the actor, on an occasion in which it shall seem to the generality of the people who are present, that he ought to shew the most violent agitations, to express the utmost tranquility. This is never done properly, but it draws the highest applause from the best judges. Indeed the greatest finesses of playing are included in the art of knowing when to do this, and how to apply it as a contrast to the utmost advantage.

As



As tragedy proposes only to shew us nature on its most interesting and affecting side, the first thing the actor who proposes to excell in playing it has to consult, is how to give to every character he may be ordered to represent, the utmost air of dignity that it will bear.

A hero never appears so great, so truly such, as when the most powerful temptations, the most affecting misfortunes, the severest injuries, the most exalted projects, or the most imminent dangers are not able to shake or discompose his soul. And the more the performer, without doing violence to the sense of this author, can represent this steadiness in the character he acts, the more proof he gives us of his own skill in his profession.

In the famous tragedy of the *Horatii* and *Curatii*, which has drawn tears from the eyes of people of almost all nations, and which we have just now seen represented in a new light on one of our own theatres, there is room for a peculiar dignity of this kind. The *Horatii* are three heroes, on whom *Rome* is not afraid to venture her fate; the opposite nation does the same honour to the *Curatii*, three warriors unhappily united to the others by the nearest bonds of affinity. The other poets who have hitherto treated the subject, have all given the youngest of the *Horatii*, and the last of the *Curatii* the same ambition, the same thirst of glory, and the same love to their country; but *Corneille* has taken care to vary their characters, by describing the latter as combating with vastly greater difficulties than the other, in having the sentiments  
of

of love and friendship, both opposite to his ambition, to conquer.

There is not perhaps in all the dramatick writings in the world, an instance where there is a conflict so great to be expressed between such powerful, and at the same time such laudable passions; but it has generally been the fate of these characters to be greatly misrepresented; the players, not entering into the spirit of the poet, have always much debased the generous magnanimity of *Publius Licinius*: they change what the author means to express as the noblest courage, into a brutal fierceness, and give in place of the hero a monster, a savage, who has nothing human but in his voice and figure, and sometimes scarce either of those. The author never meant to express this young warrior rejoicing and triumphing over the man, whom his sword had laid breathless at his feet; but as a man of the most sublime and elevated soul, not thirsting after blood and victory, but sacrificing to his country the dearest of his friends.

Let any unprejudic'd person judge, whether noise and vehemence are suited to the character of this noble youth. Certainly the finesse last mentioned is here the true way to deserve applause; and the character never was so well represented, as when the hero was described to us by Mr. *Barry*, as most sedate and tranquil in the midst of his preparation, his danger, and his victory.

We cannot doubt, notwithstanding all that is whisper'd about against the new play on this subject, but that the character of this hero is drawn with as much justice in it as by *Corneille*; and we flatter ourselves, that the reader will not blame us for giving a hint to whoever of our present  
actor

actors shall have the fortune to play one succeeding part like it, by which they may be warn'd against the error of all that have attempted such before this great player.

What we shou'd admire in a heroe in real life, there is no doubt but we shall also admire in the representation of his character on the stage: this is not the pompous and the blustering air he may give himself on all occasions; a settled tranquillity of mind under circumstances that wou'd raise the utmost violence in a common man, is often the greatest mark that can be given of it. All the favours that *Augustus* had heap'd upon *Cinna*, were not able to prevent that conspirator from determining the murder of his benefactor. The designs of the conspirator are discovered, and *Augustus* commands him to be brought before him, that he may tell him he knows his perfidy. The generality of an audience might expect the emperor to rage and storm with vehemence against such unheard of crimes; and if an actor who was to represent him in such a scene were to rant it with his utmost vehemence, we are afraid he wou'd be answer'd with as loud and as absurd an applause. What man of judgment does not see that the monarch will appear the greater, the less way he gives to his passion on this occasion; and that the more provoking the circumstances are, by the ingratitude of a wretch whom he had loaded with favours, and who yet was plotting all the while he was receiving them to rob him of his throne and life, the more we shou'd be affected to see in him the majesty of a sovereign, and tranquillity of a judge, instead of the triumph of a man, who was insulting over an enemy in his power.

The

The less a man appears also to be struck with the greatness of the schemes he has projected, the higher idea he will always give us of the support he has for them. *Mithridates* must affect every man of sense, by communicating to his sons the plan of operations he had laid for humbling the pride of *Rome*, greatly more by delivering his schemes with an air of ease and calmness, than if he were to recite them with noise and emphasis, and in the character of a man who wanted to be admir'd for his genius and courage.

We cannot have a stronger instance of this truth, than in the different manner of the two greatest players of the age, Mr. *Garrick* and Mr. *Quin*, in the already often quoted part of *Pierre*.

'Tis the business of this hero to communicate to his friend the plot he had engag'd in to bring about a revolution in the state of *Venice*: The manner in which these two players deliver this account is extremely different; the one does it with fire and spirit, the other with weight, but without any sign of pride in the being engag'd in it. When we hear Mr. *Garrick* tell *Jaffier* of the execution and consequences of the deed,

Thou shalt be freed from base Priuli's tyranny,  
And thy sequester'd fortunes heal'd again.  
I shall be free from those opprobrious wrongs  
That press me now, and bend my spirit downward.  
All *Venice* free, and every growing merit  
Succeed to its just right: Fools shall be pull'd  
From wisdom's seat, those baneful unclean birds,  
Those lazy owls who perch'd near fortune's top,  
Sit only watchful with their heavy wings

To



To cuff down new fledg'd virtues that wou'd rise  
To nobler heights, and make the grove harmonious.

we allow, from his manner of speaking it, that he plays the part of a bold daring man, and one who is proud of being so ; but the greatness of the character is kept up at an infinitely higher rate by the composure with which Mr. *Quin* delivers that speech, and those which precede it. When we hear him tell *Jaffier*

I'll trust thee with a secret. There are spirits  
This hour at work. But as thou art a man  
Whom I have pick'd and chosen from the world,  
Swear that thou wilt be true to what I utter,  
And when I've told thee, that which only gods  
And men like gods are privy to, then swear  
No chance, no change shall wrest it from thy  
bosom.

Nay, it is a cause thou wilt be fond of, *Jaffier* ;  
For it is founded on the noblest basis,  
Our liberties, our natural inheritance.  
There's no religion, no hypocrisy in it ;  
We'll do the business, and ne'er fast and pray for't :  
Openly act a deed the world may gaze  
With wonder at, and envy when 'tis done.

we easily see the distinction between the manner of playing, which makes *Pierre* fond of the thought of the praise he shall deserve by this, and that which sets him above the reach of it.

Every one will allow that the person who makes too much noise about the approach of danger, gives room to suspect that he is not well prepar'd against it, and that our disdain of  
death

death appears most eminent when we are able to meet it with the greatest tranquility.

We owe too much respect to the players, for whose sake we have given these hints, to expose their errors in passages, where they have fail'd in the common way: to have applause at present is not always a proof that one deserves it; and perhaps these parallel instances may give occasion to our seeing two of the greatest characters on the stage play'd infinitely more to the satisfaction of every body that is worth pleasing, by those whom we are sure, if the alternative be offer'd them, wou'd chuse to deserve applause rather than to have it.

In consequence of these observations, we flatter ourselves that we shall be allow'd what has been advanced in the former parts of this treatise, that an elevation of sentiments is a necessary condition to the playing tragedy well; and that no one will ever act a great man with success, who has not himself a great soul. An actor who has not an elevated mind will be so far from having the power to use the contrasts we have been recommending, that he will never be able to conceive or understand them. How shou'd he, who does not know from his own heart in what manner a hero would behave in such circumstances, know how to represent him as he ought to be pictured? How will he ever be able to make those nice distinctions, that the whole justice of a character often depends upon, and which the author in vain makes in the sentiment, if the actor does not express them in his deportment? And, in consequence, how will he ever please those who are able to judge?

The judicious performer will find that the avoiding the pomp of what we generally call tragedy-speaking, is not only necessary on these and a thousand other occasions, to give an air of true greatness and dignity to a character; but that there are a great many other instances in which it is of excellent use, and will procure him the applause of all who have taste. Poets are far from being infallible, or incapable of error. Our best tragedies abound with redundant ornaments, which offend the ear of every one who understands the true spirit of dramatick writing. These however may be vastly shaded by the actor, and the passages most blameable render'd at least passable, only by this simplicity in the manner of delivering them. When a profusion of figures are thrown into the mouth of a character, where nature wou'd have dictated nothing but what was simple and affecting, the more pompously such false beauties are deliver'd, the more they shock the understanding; and those very passages which one sees all the judicious faces in the pit frowning upon as they are spoken in many of our favourite plays, if delivered more unaffectedly, and the more glaring foibles sunk in the speaking, wou'd assuredly pass without offence; tho' they cou'd never be made to deserve applause.

Tho' there are many occasions in which this plain manner of speaking has great charms, yet it is to be acknowledg'd that there are many others, in which all the pomp and dignity which the actor is able to bestow upon the words in the delivery of them, is scarce sufficient. Sometimes by means of mere vehemence, sometimes by means of what we more properly express by

N

the

the word *dignity* (for there is a wide difference between these, tho' the galleries do not always find it out,) the artful player hides the defects of the poet, and gives a seeming meaning to what has really in itself scarce any.

The player who is able to examine strictly and critically the dialogue in that part of a tragedy, in which the character he is to represent is concern'd; to avoid in his recitation every thing that is faulty in the author, or that is only likely to seem so to the audience; to hide real blemishes, and to palliate exceptionable passages; and, in fine, to give a new lustre to the beauties in his part, by a well apply'd energy or by a judicious ease and simplicity; will always obtain the valuable character of a player, who understands the finesse of tragedy. This is the highest applause his art can bestow, and which he will have fewer rivals in, than in most other excellencies that fall in his way: But the acquiring such a reputation is not all that he has to take care of, there must be a constant fund of merit to sustain it, and in some scenes of dissimulation the greatest delicacy of turn can hardly preserve it.

There are but very few men or women upon the present stage who have the happy talent of uniting, as is necessary to the finesse of tragedy, all the majesty of the king, or heroine, to all the address and artifice of the player.

We have had occasion, in the course of this work, sometimes to mention the very justly celebrated Mr. *Garrick* as inferior to the hero of another stage; but we must do him the justice to observe, that when he is upon his guard, no man ever made this difficult combination with so much success. There are many parts of *King Richard*,



*Richard*, in which he excells all the players who ever appeared in that favourite and difficult character, in this nice particular ; and in *Macbeth* there is not a scene toward the latter end of the play, in which he does not give us instances of it, that please and charm every body who is able to take in this uncommon as well as eminent beauty.

There are indeed few of our performers, who even have the finesse necessary to preserve the distinction between what is properly *tragedy*, and what, tho' call'd by the same name, often deserves no other appellation than that of *heroic comedy*.

— Perhaps it wou'd be a judicious scheme to adapt a peculiar middle manner between these two, and in that always to play the characters of the *modern Heroes* in tragedy. We are not to suppose the same dignity and elevation of style necessary for a *Torriſmond*, that is for a *Brutus* ; nor wou'd we have an *Altamont* deliver himself with the pomp of a *Cato*. Lord *Townley* may be deliberate in his speech, and give a great deal of force and energy to some passages, but he has no business to imitate *Bajazet* or even *Tamerlane* in his delivery.

There is no fault but has also its contrary in the opposite extreme. As we have some players who pronounce what they have to say in the same tone and accent, whether it be a *Manly* or an *Alexander* who speaks ; so we have some others who are so fond of connecting the ideas of antiquity and heroism together, that put them out of a *Greek* or *Roman* habit, and they think they have lost the privilege of speaking with dignity.

We have very few players who seem at all to comprehend that greatness has as many peculiar manners of expression, as tenderness, or any other of the grand characters of tragedy. That among some nations it has always a rigid and severe air; among others a great deal of lenity and sweetness; and that it sometimes has as much distance between what it is in one man merely in regard to his manner and temper, and another under the same circumstances, as there is between the times in which they liv'd.

No body will question but that there is true greatness both in the character of *Caled*, and in that of *Eumenes*, in the siege of *Damascus*. Yet the real difference between Turkish and Christian greatness is so very great, that the actor wou'd play a very contemptible part, who shou'd in one of them attempt to imitate that sort of dignity which he saw succeed in the other.

The stage would be greatly more esteemed than it is at present, if the generality of our players wou'd apply themselves in earnest to study, not only these essential differences, but those also which distinguish the same passions in people of different countries and of different ages. It is remark'd that on the *French* stage, the hero, be he *Greek*, *Roman* or *Egyptian*, is quite the *Frenchman* in his air and deportment. It is but justice to acknowledge that in *Mr. Quin*, *Zingis* is a *Moor*, *Bajazet* a *Turk*, and *Brutus* a *Roman*; but we are afraid that even the best of our actors, after this consummate player, will be censur'd for turning heroes of the most distant parts of the earth into very *Englishmen*. The mischief has been attempted to be remedied in *France*, but in vain: An audience of *Frenchmen*, fond of  
the

the customs of their own country, cou'd not bring themselves to approve the manners of another, even the proper ones of the characters represented; but perseverance probably wou'd have brought them over: 'Tis hard to break through old customs, but not impossible: we have a proof, in the new manner of playing in tragedy, which has so happily taken place among us, of the unnaturally pompous one so highly applauded by our fathers, that what from its novelty may appear very shocking to the common ear at first, will, provided it have justice on its side, soon make its way by perseverance.

## C H A P. XIV.

*Of the Finesses in playing, peculiar to Comedy.*

THE performer in tragedy ought always to present himself before us in the most advantageous manner, and under the most graceful figure he can. But this is far from being the case in every part in comedy; he is there very frequently to exhibit himself in the least pleasing light, and 'tis often his chief business to make himself as foolish, as extravagant, and as absurd as he can.

We have already observed that the generality of those, who at present set up for criticks in dramatick writings, make a very great difference between *genteel Comedy*, and what they improperly have debased by the name of *low Comedy*. If we examine, with an impartial and discerning eye, many of the pieces which they throw into the latter class, we shall find

in them at least as great a share of invention, and as much wit and spirit, as in those other pieces for which they express so high an esteem; and it is not less true, that there requires full as much genius and merit in an actor to succeed in these low parts, as wou'd serve him to make a principal figure among the high ones; or that the performers who acquit themselves well in these, deserve as much applause, as those who excell in the others.

Perhaps there is as much wit in the part of the simple *Tom* in the *Conscious Lovers*, as in the favourite *Bevill*; and tho' the generality of our audiences, for want of the advantages of a powder'd perriwig and lac'd coat, have not chanc'd to find it out, yet till Mr. *Barry* play'd *Bevill*, there has been generally as much merit in the performance of the man, as in that of the master. We are ready to allow that there are some qualifications necessary for the performer in genteel comedy, which the player of the lower characters may do without; among these are a good person, a genteel deportment, and an acquaintance with the manner of people in high life; and yet 'tis but very lately that we have found people who thought these absolutely necessary to the playing them.

Both kinds find it their business to present us with copies of human nature: But the performer in genteel comedy, never shews us nature otherwise than as polish'd by education; whereas the player of low comedy gives it us without this advantage and improvement. Setting aside this difference, both have not only the same end to pursue, which is to ridicule our own foibles to us, or to entertain us with the representation

of



of the fallies of an extravagant imagination, or the weaknesſes of an unſettled heart; but both draw all the peculiar excellencies in their art, all the fineſſes of their play, from the very ſame ſources. The actors in low comedy, entertain us either by the whimſical air they give their own characters, or by the talent they have of making us merry at the expence of the other perſons in the play.

There are a thouſand different ways of executing the firſt: That to which the player however ought of all others to have the firſt recourſe, is to profit of all the circumſtances which may fall in his way to make his character ſtriking to the audience. Is it a *mifer* that he repreſents? If he enters his apartment, and finds two candles burning upon the table, he ought very carefully to put out one of them. Is it a man who affects liberality, extravagance and a perfect careleſſneſs about money? If he is conſtrain'd to beſtow ſomething upon any perſon that is on the ſtage with him, let him expreſs in his countenance an unwillingneſs to part with his money, tho' he pretends to give it with the utmoſt profuſion and eaſe; let him alſo purpoſely drop a few pieces, and as ſoon as the man's back is turn'd, let him carefully pick them up, and put 'em up into his purſe again.

There is ſcarce any one of thoſe which we diſtinguiſh by the name of ſimple characters, but is in reality a mixt one. Every imperfection we ſee in a man, is properly an aſſemblage of a great number of other imperfections. The comedian therefore, in order to ſucceed perfectly in the character he plays, ought to decompoſe the folly he is to repreſent to us, to examine each

part of it separately, and in consequence of this to unfold to us every ingredient of the whole, and every thing that has connexion with the principal foible, so far as the nature of the part will admit of it. We are in real life accus-tom'd to see a man who is full of envy always morose and surly; and a fool always shews that he is perfectly contented with himself, and ex-pects that every body else shou'd be as well con-tented with him.

Above all other things the player of *low Co-medy*, or, as it may perhaps be more properly hereafter call'd, *humorous Comedy*, ought to make it his business to copy the ridiculous habits and peculiarities that are found about that sort of people the character he is to act in is drawn from; and these, provided they do not jar with the rest of the piece, are always to be made to accompany the characterising folly. Does he represent a statesman, a *Polonius*? Let him have a wildness and hurry in his air, and scarce ever attend to what is said to him, or so much as look at the man to whom he addresses his dis-course. Is his character that of a pretty gen-tleman of the age? Let him lisp and clip his words, and soften the vowels of every syllable. He must not only make his advantage of every the least circumstance that can serve to introduce the ri-diculous side of his character; he is not only to expose before us every subordinate folly that en-ters into the composition of his capital one; but after he has added to these all the tricks and ha-bits that fools of the same stamp have in common life, if the author has chanc'd to neglect the keeping up the character in any particular in-stance,

stance, he ought to supply from his own imagination all that is wanting to make it of a piece with the rest.

If he plays the part of a footman to some insolent rich man, let the audience see in him what they never fail to observe in such a fellow in real life, a mimicry of the master's manner and deportment; let him take up the tone of voice, the toss of the head, and the whole air of the fool he serves; and if he has occasion to be upon the stage at the same time with some honest person of an ordinary trade, let him take care that the audience may read in his looks and in his gesture all that pleasure which people of this low condition take in insulting those, whose state of life they envy, tho' they are too idle to fall into it.

The fools in *Shakeſpear's* plays would make an excellent figure on the stage, if this sort of mimicry were kept up in them. There is not one of these who does not take upon him the air of somebody of importance in one part or other of his character, and often that of several different kinds of people in the several parts of the same play. Let us only recollect the fool in *As you like it*; what infinite scope for pleasantries of this kind is there in the philosophic speech *Shakeſpear* has put into this fellow's mouth, when talking to a person whom he supposes more a fool than himself, and who asks him how he likes a shepherd's life? he answers him,

— “ Truly, shepherd, in respect of itself, it is a  
 ‘ good life; but in respect that it is a shepherd's  
 ‘ life, it is naught: in respect that it is solitary, I  
 ‘ like it very well, but in respect that it is private,  
 ‘ it is a very vile life. Now in respect that it is in  
 N 5 ‘ the

‘ the fields, it pleases me well ; but in respect that  
 ‘ it is not in the court it is tedious : as it is a spare  
 ‘ life, look you, it fits my humour very well, but  
 ‘ as there is no more plenty in it, it goes much  
 ‘ against my stomach. Hast thou any philosophy  
 ‘ in thee, shepherd ? ”

With all the intrinsic merit of this speech, with all its true humour, it at the utmost only draws from us an indolent smile upon the stage : And why ? because the player who acts the part wants that address which we have been recommending.

It is spoke in a sort of unmeaning, yet affected tone, and is truly a fool’s speech, as we hear it. We will not name any person upon this occasion, but there is one man in the world famous for speaking these kind of nothings, with all the solemnity of a philosopher.

If the player, before he acts this part again, would throw himself into this gentleman’s way and catch his manner, we would promise him a much better reception.

There is another piece of infinite humour in the same character, which shares the same bad fate ; this is the account which this celebrated fool gives of the duel he had like to have fought, but that it prov’d to be upon the *seventh cause*. He tells *Jaques*, who had been out of the world enough not to understand this sort of language, that

“ The lye was seven times remov’d ; as thus, sir.  
 ‘ I did dislike the cut of a certain courtier’s beard ;  
 ‘ he sent me word, if I said his beard was not cut :  
 ‘ well



‘ well he was in the mind that it was ; this is call’d  
‘ the retort courteous : if I sent him word again,  
‘ I thought it was not well cut ; he would send  
‘ me word he cut it to please himself ; this is  
‘ called the quip modest : if again it was not well  
‘ cut, he disabled my judgment ; this is called  
‘ the reply churlish : if again it was not well cut,  
‘ he would answer I spake not true ; this is called  
‘ the reproof valiant : if again it was not well cut,  
‘ he would say I lie ; this is called the counter-  
‘ check quarrelsome, and so the lie circumstantial  
‘ and the lie direct. — Now I dared go no far-  
‘ ther with him than the lie circumstantial, nor  
‘ he durst not give me the lie direct, and so we  
‘ measured swords and parted.”

There is a spirit of humour in this speech that compels us to laugh, let it be deliver’d how it will ; but how much greater would the pleasure be to us if we heard it spoken in the tone and accent of one of the youths of the present time, who always take care to quarrel by rule and measure.

The judicious player in this way will also find infinite funds for humour in the conduct of the passions that occur in his character. The actress who is to represent in this style a young, innocent, and unpractis’d creature, ought to take every occasion to discover her thoughts when they ought to be kept secret, by her looks, her gestures, her sighs, or whatever other incident may suit best with the circumstances : is she to represent a cunning creature, who is to dissemble love, and that under pretence of wanting to hide it ? let her watch every look of the person

he is to deceive, and find a thousand impertinent opportunities of ogling and sighing at him.

There are, beside these, a thousand other ways of adding to the spirit the author has given the character, all easily in the player's power, if he will only study the occasions of them: would he throw yet more ridicule into his character, let his actions be in some cases directly contrary to his intentions. We should never fail to be diverted by the lover who, while he is transported with rage and fury at the falshood of his mistress, and makes the most solemn vows to fly her sight for ever afterwards, is all the while walking towards her lodgings.

The half deaf messenger who repeats aloud, as he goes along, the business which he was enjoyn'd to keep as the profoundest secret; or the Irish footman, who being order'd to go a certain way to a street where he is to deliver two letters, the one at a house on the right hand, and the other at one on the left, finds his way in at the wrong end, and by punctually obeying his orders delivers both the letters wrong, will always be secure of applause: these, and a variety of other instances, may give hints to the actor which he may copy into his part on parallel occasions.

Besides thus contriving all possible means to make his own character ridiculous, the comedian is often to think of every possible method of raising a laugh at the expence of the other persons in the play: this is the great subject of the finesse in comic playing, and this is often to be done by the assistance the play itself gives, when properly attended to and judiciously managed.

The assistances the player in this way receives from the play itself, are of two kinds; the one dictates

dictates his lesson wholly to him, and there is no more requir'd to profit from it, than that he repeat his speeches punctually and literally: the other kind is not less eminent in its use, but can only serve the player in proportion as he knows how to employ it to advantage. In this there are certain delicate ironies, certain mischievous allusions, which may be made very intelligible to the audience, tho' they are not literally pronounced; these furnish the player with means of shining in his part, but then they require to be play'd off with all his art, in order to appear in their full beauty.

One of the most certain resources the comedian will find in the piece itself to divert us at the expence of the rest of the persons, is the opportunity the author sometimes gives him to parody a part of their characters; these burlesque imitations frequently occur in comedy: they are sometimes to be understood to be dictated by resentment, as where the husband in the *Old Batchelor* mimicks the tone of his wife's voice in her speech to her gallant, *Lie upon your stomach; Mr. Spintext; lying upon your stomach will cure you of the cholic*; and sometimes they are to be understood as mere mirth and pleasantry.

But as much as these kinds of mimickry please us when they are deliver'd with a proper and judicious grace and nicety, so much do they offend us when cold, lifeless, and insipid, and when they are forc'd upon us without these advantages. In the latter case the whole is a picture without life, in the former it is a picture which breathes, which thinks.

Many

Many of our actors who are free enough in the use of these imitations, make no other distinction in the several kinds of them than such as obviously result from the age, sex, and condition of the character; but those of a superior merit find other innumerable differences in the expression of them, each of which has its charms for a judicious spectator.

When the superior actors in a comedy cannot draw from the author those assistances which they stand in need of to give occasion to these finesses in their playing, they do it from their own genius, and under the direction of this bold but unerring guide, they never fail to open several ways by which they may naturally and regularly arrive at the end they have in view. Very frequently there occur accidents that give room for contradiction, and which give the player an opportunity of entertaining the audience out of his own stock; these always give us the more joy, as they occasion the more concern and uneasiness in the person they are address'd to: as, if two people get into a house together, where it is the business of one of them to keep the family in ignorance that he is there; and the other, by the loudness of his voice, by hawking, stamping, and a thousand other noises that he contrives to make, keeps him in a continual alarm at the fear of a discovery. A lover thinks he cannot be in too much hurry to read a letter that his footman acquaints him he has brought from his mistress; and the fellow plagues him with a thousand delays, searches all his pockets ten times over for it, and at length, after great preparation, gives him another paper in the place of it. Contradictions like these, thrown in with judgment, and conducted within the



the bounds of moderation, have a double advantage in comedy, as they make us laugh, not only at the person who plays them off, but at the concern and impatience of the person who is plagued with them.

We should swell this chapter into a volume, if we were to recount all the means by which the player in representing one part may give us occasion to be merry at the expence of the rest; we shall therefore wave this subject, and pass on to the advice we have to give the players concerning the use of these finesses of their profession.

## C H A P. XV.

*Rules which ought to be observ'd in the use of  
Finesses.*

**I**T is easy to see, from many of the examples we have already given, that several of the finesses of the player tend to no other end than to render the representation the more agreeable. Even these ought, as far as it is possible, as well as those which are intended to give it a greater air of truth and reality, to arise naturally from what the author has himself thrown into the parts; and when they want this advantage, they ought to be so carefully introduc'd as not to appear far fetch'd, or forc'd into the play.

Above all things, the player must be upon his guard not to introduce things by way of embellishment which contradict the nature of the part he acts, and not to throw too many marks of discernment, wit, or understanding, into a character which the author meant to represent as having very little of these qualifications; he is  
never

never to throw into his part a finesse which, tho' it may be apt to produce a good effect upon the generality of an audience, yet speaks his forgetfulness of the circumstance and situation of the character; and finally, he is not to add any thing that supposes a perfect use of reason, at a time when the anxiety he is under scarce gives him opportunity to attend fully to any thing, and under which he ought hardly to know what he says or does.

These rules are founded on a general one, which is indeed the basis of all the rest; that is, when there is no adding the finesse without injuring the propriety and appearance of reality in the scene, it is always better to play with naked truth, than with all the embellishments of a false decoration.

We have hardly known a comic character in which more of the finesse has been introduc'd, or that with greater success, than by *Mrs. Pritchard* in that of *Rosalind*; her play with her lover is full of it; but this judicious actress has the prudence to know, that tho' this address is agreeable in many places, it is not necessary in, nay it is not compatible with, all. Where she falls in with the luckless shepherd and his cruel mistress, she sees merit enough in the matter she has to deliver without any additional flourishes; she therefore reserves them for future occasions, and seems there proud of shewing us the beauty of speaking plainly and simply: with how perfectly natural an accent does she deliver the speech she has on this occasion, and yet how pleas'd is every body that hears her?

And

And why, I pray you, who may be your mother?

That you insult, exult, and all at once,  
Over the wretched. What tho' you have some  
beauty,

(As, by my faith, I see no more in you,  
Than without candle may go dark to bed)

Must you be therefore proud and pitiless?

Why, what means this, why do you look on  
me?

I see no more in you than in the ordinary  
Of nature's sale's work : ods, my little life,  
I think she means to tangle mine eyes too ;  
No, faith, proud mistress, hope not after it ;  
'Tis not your inky brows, your black silk hair,  
Your bugle eye-balls, or your cheeks of cream,  
That can enchant my spirits to your worship.  
You foolish shepherd, why do you follow her,  
Like foggy south, puffing with wind and rain ?  
You are a thousand times a properer man  
Than she a woman : 'tis such fools as you  
That make the world full of ill-favour'd children.

'Tis not her glass but you that flatter her,  
And out of you she sees herself more proper  
Than any of her lineaments can shew her.

But, mistress, know yourself, down on your  
knees,

And thank heav'n fasting for a good man's love,  
For I must tell you friendly in your ear,  
Sell when you can, you are not for all markets :  
Cry the man mercy, love him, take his offer ;  
So take her to thee, shepherd.—

The

The native ease and spirit with which this excellent performer delivers this, may serve as a pattern to all that follow her in scenes of a like kind: her own passions have no share in the matter, therefore she exerts none of them; but with as pert and pleasant raillery, gives a lesson that pleases by its own unornamented beauties, more than it could do with all the additional graces in the world. An instance of the same kind we have in a soliloquy of *Iago's* in *Othello*, in which, after an infinite deal of finesse on every occasion, *Mr. Macklin* first set an example which has been followed by *Mr. Garrick*, of delivering plainly and without ornament, a speech in which we have been us'd to see a world of unnatural contortion of face and absurd bye-play. The place we allude to is this:

If I can fasten but one cup upon him, [*speaking of Cassio*]

With that which he hath drank to night already,  
He'll be as full of quarrel and offence

As my young mistress' dog,

Now, my sick fool, *Rodrigo*,

Whom love has turn'd almost the wrong side  
out

To *Desdemona*, hath to night carous'd

Potations pottle deep, and he's to watch :

Three lads of *Cyprus*, noble swelling spirits,

The very elements of this warlike isle,

Have I to night fluster'd with flowing cups,

And they watch too : now 'mongst this flock of  
drunkards,

Am I to put our *Cassio* on some action

That may offend the isle. But here they come.

The



The part of *Iago* is so full of occasions of finesse and additional bye-play, that we are pleas'd to see in this place a plain sentiment plainly delivered. If a man is full of his ornaments at every period, he loses the merit of them; they seem natural to him, not the effects of a skill in his profession: we love to see him naked in his manner, at times, that we may relish his flourishes the better, where they are properly apply'd.

To this observation we may add; another, which is, that it is more prudent to use no finesse at all, than to hazard defects in it; since, in regard to all agreeable impressions, we had rather not feel them at all, than feel them but imperfectly. Sometimes the actor, in his attempt to perform his part with more delicacy than ordinary, plays it with very little justice or propriety; the artful additions that he may make to the bare words of his part, succeed only in proportion as they are derived from the true source; and he is not always able to keep his imagination within these bounds. While that agent profusely throws about its treasures, it does not always accommodate them to the circumstances from which only they can obtain their power of pleasing, and when it refuses freely and naturally to assist the player, he is never to attempt to press it into his service.

Provided the comedian acts with truth and justice, he will never fail sufficiently to please a great part of his audience: we may remember a time when *Macklin*, who had for many years perform'd with applause characters in comedy that suited him, and had in a peculiar manner succeeded in the use of an infinite number of the finesses in playing, was reduc'd, by the necessities

of the company he was engag'd in, to play the parts of *Sir Novelty Fashion*, *Lord Foppington*, and the rest of that kind : he had the judgment to know that he was here out of his proper sphere, and he never ventured at the finesses which he had been so famous for in the parts that naturally fell in his way ; but as he always play'd naturally and with justice, he received the applause of the multitude in these characters as well as in the rest ; and probably he would have had less of it, if forcing his imagination to bring in a thousand finesses, he had expos'd himself to the necessity of playing with less truth.

## C H A P. XVI.

*Of Bye-play, or what are called Stage-Tricks.*

THE variety of finesses which fall in the way of the player who has judgment and imagination, is very great : some of them produce their effect upon the audience, tho' they happen not to be looking upon the actor at the time ; others address themselves wholly to the sight : the last depend entirely upon the action, and therefore are lost if they are not attended to by the eye. These are rather of a lower kind than the others, and are distinguished from them under the name of stage-tricks. We have a way of using the same phrase also to express the artificial means an author of a comedy finds of conducting his scenes, and introducing incidents, so as to make them the most striking to an audience : in this sense of the term it is of a very extensive meaning, but in that in which it is apply'd to the player, it is confin'd within narrower bounds, and

ex-

expresses nothing but such action as serves to picture out the sentiments of the characters in the scene, in the most expressive and the most pleasing manner.

It may be observed in general, that provided this bye-play is conducted with judgment, we cannot have too much of it in comedy; every kind of it has its place in this sort of plays; comedies are written to be acted, not to be barely repeated; and when we say of a new one, that it will please better in the closet than it did on the stage, we pass but a very coarse compliment upon the players who perform'd in it.

The bye-play, like all other kinds of finesses, contributes either to the giving the scene a greater air of truth and reality, or else solely to the rendering it more pleasing. That part of it which belongs to the first, has its place in tragedy as well as in comedy; the other in comedy only, as being below the dignity of the other kind of representations.

It is to be observed of every species of it, that the more intimate a connexion it has with the intrigue and business of the play, the more perfect it is in its kind, and the more it will always please. It is not however absolutely essential to it to have this close connexion; 'tis in many cases sufficient that it be not contradictory to the scheme and intent of the whole, and that it have probability on its side. In the *Royal Merchant* or *Beggars Bush*, the messenger who is sent to the young merchant from his mistress, is a beggar; and as such, while the merchant is employed in reading the letter, he takes up the other part of his profession, and picks his pocket. This is not at all necessary or essential to the intrigue of the play,

play, but it is no way contradictory to it, and it employs a moment in which we shou'd otherwise be at a stand, and that by an incident quite in character for the person who does it.

All bye-play, as well that which contributes to the truth and reality of the action, as that which serves only to render it more pleasing in the representation, may be in some cases executed by one person alone, whereas in others it cannot be perform'd but by the concurrence of several. In both these circumstances, the manners of the characters are carefully to be kept up to, and the peculiar circumstances of age and sex, as well as those of rank and education, closely observ'd; where any thing of this is omitted, we are shock'd at what was meant to entertain us, and we condemn that as absurdity, which was meant as finesse. It agrees very well with the nature of comedy in general that it be play'd with freedom; yet we are to banish indecency and libertinism from it. Every joke that a lady may not enjoy with a smile that does not reflect upon her modesty, is to be banish'd from the part of the actor, whatever be the quality or circumstances of the character he plays. We are not to allow of any thing which sinks into flat buffoonry. The player is not to travesty or burlesque the muse, when the poet has taken care to preserve to her all her native dignity.

When the bye-play which we are recommending the use of, depends on the conjunct performances of several different actors, all that are to be concern'd in it ought to concert their plan of acting together in such a manner beforehand, that there may appear all the necessary precision

in



in the gestures and motions of each in regard to those of the rest.

When two actors who are together upon the stage, are supposed to be both affected by the same impression, their action ought undoubtedly to be of the same kind; but still there is a difference to be observed in the degree, otherwise we feel the want of propriety, and confound the two characters. There are two rules which will serve the player in every occasion of this kind.

Probability requires that the degree of expression in each be proportion'd to that of the interest which each has in the action that occasions their emotions. In the representations upon the stage, the case is exactly the same as in pictures. Whatever is the principal figure in the piece, ought always to have the privilege of attracting our regard beyond the rest.

It is also as necessary a circumstance that the attitudes and gestures of the several actors be so contrived as to have as much contrast as possible between them. Every thing on the stage ought to have the appearance of truth and reality. We carry our love of diversity so far on this occasion, that we expect the actors not only to be different from one another, but that every one of them, in every part that he acts, shou'd differ from himself in every other part, at least in some particulars that may strike and affect us.

## C H A P. XVII.

*Of Variety in Playing.*

**I**T is evident that variety, or a power of appearing in very different forms, is an essential requisite to those actors who have an ambition to excel in both tragedy and comedy: And it is scarce less plain that the same qualification is also necessary to those who propose it to themselves to excel in only one of these provinces, provided they intend to gain applause in more than one single character: Of the two, however, variety is more necessary to the person who proposes to excel in playing comedy, than to him who attempts to make a figure principally in tragedy.

Comedy takes in a vast compass: It extends indifferently to every kind of character; every original is proper for its purpose that can possibly be made to entertain an audience in the copy. Tragedy, by the customs of the world, is allow'd less freedom in the choice of its subjects; it presents us with the characters of only great and illustrious persons, august heroes, or noble villains.

The principal intent of tragedy is to affect us deeply by the recital of uncommon misfortunes; or else to astonish, and at the same time instruct us by great examples. It is no objection to the merit of the performance, that the heroes of one story represent in many things those of another; provided it leads us on thro' uncertainty, terrors, sorrow, and even tears, to the very catastrophe, we are content; and when the actors introduc'd  
upon

upon the stage, are plac'd in a new and an interesting situation, and while they act and speak consistently with the dignity of tragedy and with that situation, we never think it necessary to enquire whether they are or are not the same sort of characters that we have already seen a thousand times in the same place. We are even very well pleased to see the same hero appear a second time as a new character upon the stage, provided we see him under some other circumstances, and are interested in his fate by some new means.

Thus the performer in tragedy, even tho' he push his success so far as to attempt every kind of character within the compass of it, and plays one night in the tender and affecting strain, another in the majestic, and a third in the fierce and terrible, has nothing more to study, than to be able to represent with proper dignity the man of consequence; or, at the utmost, he has only a very few characters, and those all alike in many things, to copy. The actor, on the other hand, who proposes to himself to excel in comedy, has infinitely more difficulties to struggle with, and has an absolute necessity, beyond all other things, for that variety which we are treating of in this chapter, provided he does not tie himself down to some one peculiar cast of characters. It is his business to copy nature in her several forms, and to appear to us one night as the courtier, another as the citizen; one night as the gay sprightly beau, another as the grave and sober magistrate. He is to represent men the most different in their birth and situation in life, in their professions, and even in their way of thinking; he is to be alternatively insolent and

O

fawning:

fawning : In one piece majestic, and imperious, in another humble and timorous. At one time he is to be jocose, and at another serious ; one day indifferent, and another the most tender lover ; at one time simple and unmeaning, and at another full of subtilty, artifice, and address. He must every day not only change his whole exterior form and figure, but his very tone and accent must vary in his several characters, and he must even seem to change his very being.

The audience expect all this variety in the man who claims their applause as a general actor in comedy ; and the player himself is as sensible of the necessity of it, and of the justice of their expectations from him, as they are : he knows that there is this difference in the requisites for performance in tragedy, and those for comedy. The generality of our players seem also to have a very just sense of the variety they must be able to command in themselves, when they undertake to play in both capacities, as it is now the general taste among them to do ; and they seem not less sensible of the vast changes they must be able to assume in playing the most different characters in comedy.

Scarce any man among them is so absurd, as to think of playing the *Miser* and a *Lord Foppington* in the same tone ; but when we have allow'd them this, we are to add that the very best of them are apt to fall into an error that gives us great distaste ; this is their supposing that however necessary an absolute difference of manner, deportment, and delivery, is to the playing these different characters, that they are under no necessity of varying their play, when they perform the same kind of parts. This gives them



them an unnatural uniformity, which never fails to lessen them among all who are able to judge of what an author meant.

Whatever general resemblance there may be between certain characters in different plays, there are always some distinguishing strokes in each. The *Miser* of the play which takes its name from that character, and the *Gomez* of the *Spanish Fryar*, are characters which have a great deal of general likeness; but the actor who endeavours to play them both in the same taste, from his opinion that there is no occasion for his exerting any variety in them, will never please any of his audience, but those who have not taste enough to see the distinction their authors have made between them.

We have before recommended it to the judicious actor, to decompose his parts, and regulate himself by the several subordinate passions, of which the grand one that makes his character is form'd. There is no circumstance in which this lesson will be of more use, than this of the performing parts which have a general resemblance, yet which the author meant to distinguish by many things from one another, and which the better part of an audience will expect to see represented under those distinctions; let him examine separately every subordinate passion in which ever of them he is to act, and he will naturally and necessarily, provided that he determines to act with truth, fall into a diversity of playing in them, which will in many cases quite deface the general resemblance; and give his audience variety where they will be very glad of it, tho' they did not expect it: And in all the characters of this kind, he will be sure to have no more re-

semblance between them than the author intended there shou'd be.

The raving of *Orestes* and the pretended madness of *Edgar* may furnish us with an instance of this kind. We remember a player who never fail'd of great applause in both these characters, and yet who play'd them both so like one another, that *Orestes* might have been *Edgar*, or *Edgar Orestes*, for any thing the audience wou'd have distinguish'd of the matter. But tho' the applause of a multitude may follow noise and raving, there are not wanting in every audience judges, who can condemn, and who never fail'd to resent this blunder with all the contempt it deserved.

We have at present a player, grown old in the profession, us'd to an uncommon variety of parts in it, and among the rest to these; and who gives us both with a sufficient degree of spirit, and yet both as different, as the rage of a *Hotspur* is from that of a *Bajazet*. In the character of *Orestes*, we read in him a heart torn to pieces with anguish and with rage, and which gives room in his ravings for no other thoughts: In the other we read a settled sorrow thro' all the fancy'd wildness of his deportment, and can see that it is but put on, and that all the while some other passion wholly possesses his heart.

It has been the mistaken custom of many who have play'd *Edgar*, to bestow all their care and attention on the mad part, as if of the utmost consequence: Mr. *Ryan* has judg'd otherwise. See him in it, and he is mad enough, tho' not mad with that vehemence which exhausts the spirits of the others, and leaves them no power to express the more affecting things that follow those

those scenes. There is not perhaps on the stage a more moving scene than that of *Edgar's* discovering himself to *Cordelia*. *Shakespeare* meant the mad things that precede it principally as foils to it; and 'tis in this sense that the player we are commending in the part performs it. We do not perceive that he wants spirit in his entering in all the appearance of madness, with

Away—The foul fiend follows me—  
Thro' the sharp hawthorn blows the cold wind—  
Mum—Get thee to bed and warm thee.

Who gives any thing to poor *Tom*, whom the foul fiend has led thro' fire and thro' flame, thro' bushes and bogs; that has laid knives under his pillow, and halters in his pew; that has made him proud of heart to ride on a bay trotting horse over four inch bridges, to course his own shadow for a traitor.

*Swithin* footed thrice the cold,  
He met the night mare and her nine-fold,  
'Twas there he did appoint her;  
He bid her alight and her troth plight  
And arroynt the witch, arroynt her.

Nor afterwards when he has discovered *Cordelia* in his wild answer to her questioning him about the king,

Who relieves poor *Tom* that sleeps upon the nettle  
With the hedge-pig for his pillow.

He has the address indeed to throw an uncommon degree of spirit into this last speech by

way of contrast to what is to follow ; but how are we struck when we see him, from all this pretended raving, sink into reason, and tell the princess, I am *Edgar*.

My father seeks my life, which I preserv'd  
In hopes of some bless'd minute to oblige  
Distress'd *Cordelia* : And the gods have given it.  
That thought alone prevail'd with me to take  
This frantick dress : To make the earth my bed  
With these bare limbs, all change of seasons bide,  
Noon's scorching heat, and midnight's piercing  
cold,

To feed on offals, and to drink with herds ;  
To combat with the winds, and be the sport  
Of clowns, or what's more wretched yet, their pity.

If we are deeply affected with the heart-felt emotions with which he delivers this ; how are we charm'd with the spirit which he exerts in speaking afterwards, when she has avow'd her love to him.

Look I have flint and steel, the implements  
Of wandering lunatics, I'll strike a light  
And make a fire beneath this shed to dry  
Thy storm-drench'd garments, e're thou liest to  
rest thee.

Then fierce and wakeful as th' *Hesperian* dragon,  
I'll watch beside thee, to protect thy sleep.  
Mean while the stars shall dart their kindest beams,  
And angels visit my *Cordelia's* dreams.

These are the real beauties of the part of *Edgar* : the galleries may be affected by noise, and a series of frantick actions, which neither they nor the person who exhibits them understand ;



stand ; but 'tis the change to reason, the contrast of these passionate and affecting speeches alone, that charms the more judicious part of an audience ; and the making the madness not the principal part of the character, but subservient to these, is the great secret of that difference which we are applauding Mr. *Ryan* for making between the raving of *Edgar*, and that of *Orestes*.

We have had occasion to observe that this player, judicious as he is, is blameable in his sparing himself thro' all the fourth act in the play in which he performs *Orestes*, in order to have a fund of spirits to support him in the famous scene of raving. He carries this too far. He is so tame in passages that ought to move him strongly, that we do not expect his violent raving afterwards : It appears unnatural in him, and the character is not kept up. This is one of those instances, in which we find it is in vain that the poet has done his part, if the actor fails in his : Any body that had never read this play, and only seen it acted with Mr. *Ryan* in this character, wou'd censure the author for being faulty in the manners, for not preserving the characters of his principal persons, but letting *Orestes* be, in the course of an act, two very different men. He has however done his part : Every thing in the character is of a piece with the rest, and whatever passes before the raving scene, if properly executed by the player, is connected with it, is preparatory to it, and wou'd make us expect no less from the prince, under the provoking circumstances we see him in afterwards, than what follows.

We give a place to this free censure of a player we much esteem, with the same view,

that we have in every other, we have made here ; we are hopeful that the hint may be taken, and the fault amended : And after we have said this, it is but justice to him to allow that in the raving scene, he is at least equal to any body at present on the stage. There is not a sentence in it that he has not study'd ; not an attitude in all that seems his utmost wildness, that is not the effect of the most serious consideration, or that does not tally exactly with the peculiar terror of that moment ; not a tone of his voice that is not appropriated to the very passage he delivers, or that wou'd not be absurd in any other ; and we may add to this, that there is no part on the *English* stage which will allow of so much vehemence as this, nor any that is play'd with so much.

The murder'd lovers wait me—Hark, they call!  
Nay if your blood still reeks, I'll mingle mine.  
One tomb will hold us all ;  
In dizzy—clouds!—quite lost in utter darkness—  
Guide me, some friendly pilot, thro' the storm.  
I shiver ! O I freeze !—So :—Light returns ;  
'Tis the grey dawn—  
See *Pylades*.—Behold !

I am encompass'd with a sea of blood,  
The crimson billows—O ! my brain's on fire !  
*Pyrrhus* stand off ! What woudst thou?—How  
he glares !

What envious hand has clos'd thy wounds?—  
Have at thee,

It is *Hermione* that strikes—Confusion !—  
She catches *Pyrrhus* in her arms—O save me !  
How terrible she looks ! She knits her brow !  
She frowns me dead ! She frights me into madness !

Who

Whoever remembers Mr. *Ryan's* delivering this speech, will not think we have said too much in his praise: Whoever remembers the following, which is the second raving after he has come to himself a little, will own we cannot say enough.

Who talks of reason? Better to have none  
Than not to have enough—Run some one, tell  
my *Greeks*

I will not have them touch the king—Now! now!  
I'll blaze again! See there!——Look where they  
come

A shoal of furies! How they swarm about me!  
My terror!—Hide me—O! their snaky locks!  
Hark how they hiss! See, see—their flaming brands  
Now they let drive full at me—How they grin,  
And shake their iron whips--my ears! what yelling!  
And see! *Hermione*—She sets them on,  
O—I am stung to death!—Dispatch me soon—  
There take my heart, *Hermione*! tear it out—  
Disjoint me!—kill me!—O my tortur'd soul!

When one considers the amazing difference between this madness and the ludicrous stuff that the pretending *Edgar* delivers, one wou'd be amaz'd that any man cou'd suppose the same sort of gestures and manner cou'd be proper to both. A succeeding age may not believe that there ever was a player who did, but we have seen it. The comparison between such a man and Mr. *Ryan*, is not necessary to shew us that the manner in which the latter performs these characters wou'd do honour to any body.

But it is not sufficient for the obtaining applause from the nicest judges, that the actor varies his manner, when he plays parts which seem, on a

slight view, somewhat to resemble one another : He must even do it in those which have the greatest real resemblance, for no two are wholly alike ; nay, he must not omit it in the several parts of the same character in the same play ; since in nature and reality there is no man of whatever peculiar turn of mind, that wou'd always preserve it during the changes that the circumstances he is thrown into in the course of a good comedy work in him.

The managers of our times, complain much of the fickleness of their audiences ; they tell us, that after ever so much expence employ'd on their parts, ever so much pains taken by the players, people are not contented to see the same piece many times over. They little imagine that the source of this complaint is the very want of variety, which we are here complaining of.

The keeping up a general sameness throughout a character actuated at different times by very different passions, is one of the grossest faults an actor who pretends to have any judgment can run into. But this is not all that may be said of the subject of our not relishing frequent repetitions of the same piece. Beside the avoiding this fault, the actor in comedy has an opportunity of adding new graces every time he plays a part, which wou'd keep up our attention to ever so many repeated representations. It is certain that what nature inspires will never appear distasteful after once seeing ; but nature has not in her that creeping sameness that the player too often represents her under. If she affects the same man a hundred times with the same accidents, he will indeed have the same kind of sensations every time, but he will not every time have exactly the same motions and gestures to shew them by ; nature has given us a thousand ways of expres-



expressing in our gesture, our astonishment, our grief, our anger, &c. And why is the player, because under the same circumstances a dozen nights together, to give us but one of them in a constant repetition ! 'tis this that helps to pall the same piece, however good, when daily repeated to us : We are sensible of this variety in our own natures of expressing even the same passion under the same circumstances, and we are disgusted to see the player, night after night, in the same parts of his character use the very same tone and cadence in his voice, the same attitude in his figure, and the same gestures and motions of all kinds. This ought to be as tedious to us, as it wou'd be to be compell'd to contemplate hour after hour the same revolutions of the hand in a watch, which tho' just, no body ever thought pleasing.

There is some peculiar bye-play naturally enough annexed to certain scenes in comedy, which we suffer very willingly over and over again, nay which we love the repeated use of ; but then we wou'd not have even this every time servily repeated in the same manner.

The reason why the modern actors are so very uniform, seems to be that they play rather from memory than from a feeling of the passions of their parts. When an actor, who has the true seeds of his art in him, who has genius, sensibility, and fire, performs a part in which he is thoroughly affected ; when he has the command of himself so far that he is able to vary his manner occasionally, his better way is then not to attempt the varying his gestures and play as the main end of what he is about ; let him suffer himself to be wholly possess'd of his part, let him

make the character as it were real to him, and nature will do the rest: the power he has of varying his manner will exert itself without his particular attention to it, and tho' his sense of the nature of the character will make him always appear in general the same man in it, he will yet always appear new.

## C H A P. XVIII.

*Of graces in Playing.*

**I**S an actor sensible that his playing is perfectly just and true? Is it natural? In fine, is it properly varied? An audience will always admire and esteem him in this case; but there will still want something more in order to their being charm'd with him whenever he appears; and he will see others of much less merit please infinitely more, unless he finds the way of joining to these advantages, the graces of delivery, and those of action.

When we declare that every thing ought to be conducted with *Dignity* in tragedy, we say all that concerns the player in regard to it; we include in that single word all the graces that belong to this species of playing. Those that fall in the way of the actor in comedy, are on the other hand almost infinite; what we have already delivered under the head of finesses, belong principally to this article also; and much of what we have there describ'd, may be indifferently express'd by one or the other of these names.

The finesses in comedy are almost all of them properly enough arrang'd under the heads of graces: but there are, besides these, several other

graces properly and peculiarly so call'd, which will make the business of this chapter.

These are what above all other things raise the reputation of the player, and they make one of the principal embellishments of genteel comedy. 'Tis a misfortune to the world that all who have attempted to teach this elegant article of the players profession, have found it as difficult to give any precepts in it, as to define what it truly is. What can be said of it approaching towards a definition, is at the utmost only this, that it is the art of rendering nature elegant even in her defects, and this without altering her face. If the reader wou'd have a much better idea of what it is than all that words can give him, let him look upon Mr. *Garrick* in the characters of *Ranger*, of *Archer* and of *Benedick*. The second of these is far from being of the number of those he plays best, and yet there are in many parts of it certain occasional graces thrown in, in his doing it, which we are apt to believe it wanted, even when the celebrated Mr. *Wilks* perform'd it. Perhaps the other two are as advantageous characters for a man of spirit to appear in, as the whole compass of the stage affords. They are in their own nature pleasing to the highest degree; but we are to remember that the more beauties the author has thrown into them, the more they require that sort of elegance in the performer, which we have been here describing as the general spring of all the graces in the way of his profession: And we have found lately that the character of *Othello* scarce had more share in rendering the convuls'd actor, celebrated by Mr. *Foot*, contemptible, than the native beauties of *Ranger* may have in height-

heightening the defects of a performer, whose sole merit is the being able to copy in it some few of the beauties of the player we have just mention'd.

- Every performer who finds himself not cut out for giving all the graces, all the amiable eloquence we are describing to his play in characters of this kind, will do wisely to renounce all thought of genteel comedy. A man may be able to make a figure in a Duke of *Burgundy*, or even to bawl out the character of the Bastard in *King Lear*, who is not equal to the task of performing the mad *Edgar*, or the afflicted king. There are enough of an audience who will think well of a man for being something like what they are told they ought to be pleas'd with; and while the *English* stage stands as it does at present, when noise will go down for passion, and impudence for gaiety, the player who does not want these accomplishments, will never want employment, nor even reputation, with the generality of the world; unless he runs out of his way, and attempts things which require the most opposite qualifications.

The advice we are so free in this place to give to the actors, is yet greatly more necessary to the actresses of the present time. Nothing is more certain than that a woman, unless she is qualify'd to behave gracefully in a drawing room, is not capable of performing the part of *Lady Townley*, or of many other genteel female characters of the modern comedies. Nothing is more shocking to a spectator of any degree of judgment, than to see a woman enter upon the stage with the dress of a princess, and the air of an oyster-wench. Whoever saw the daughter  
of



of *Prospero* in the *Tempest* as lately acted in *Drury Lane*, will be very sensible of the force of this proposition.

It might have been possible, we presume, to have found out a person among the number of those whom the manager of that house has taken into his pay this winter, either because he thought he shou'd want them, or because he intended the master of the other house shou'd, a player more like a Duke of *Savoy* than the person who acted her lover *Ferdinando*; but all the insignificancy of that performer was lost to the audience in the superior absurdity of the other; and scarce any body but instead of recollecting how much he was too bad for his dukedom, remember'd only how much too good he was for his mistress.

We wou'd not be understood to aim this censure at the persons of the performers we are speaking of; we have seen them act in characters in which they have pleas'd their audience very well, and have very deservedly been applauded for it; we mean only to remind the manager that we see his cunning, in sparing his better performers, and know how we ought to judge of him for it.

In many parts in comedy it is less to the purpose for the actor to put on the deportment of a man whom good company had render'd a complaisant and agreeable companion, than to give himself the air and manner of one whose whole habit is form'd upon the plan of that of the gayest and the most spirited people of the age.

The pleasing gloss, the elegant *Je ne sçais quoi*, that charms us in this manner of playing some of the

the capital parts in genteel comedy, is not solely limited to the few parts we see it employed about, but is of use in every character and every circumstance essential to that sort of playing. It is to be varied indeed according to the peculiarities of the several characters it is exerted under, but it is still to shew itself so, that we find it the certain mark that distinguishes the gayest people of high life from the rest of the world.

The graces this gives to the playing of the person who has the command of it, are often those lively, sprightly and joyous ones which distinguish the younger part of the *English* nobility, and which wou'd be infinitely more charming than they are, nay infinitely more desirable than any others, were they not so frequently found the marks of the want of the more solid and truly valuable accomplishments. Sometimes they are less genteel, and consequently less engaging, yet are they not then without their peculiar merit, provided that they are apply'd with propriety. The impertinent and idle gaiety of the modern race of *Petits maitres*, wou'd but very ill become the arrogant statesman, or the precise and philosophick *Cimberton* of the modern comedy; or it wou'd agree as ill with the character of a man who, fond of an imaginary importance, seeks only to impress a respect and awe upon the persons he converses with; yet it will be very happily apply'd in the character of *Jack Tattle*, and fifty other of the idle beaux of the stage.

As it is the business of the player to throw all the graces he is capable of into the characters of persons who are to succeed by being amiable, this is not to be omitted even in those characters where these ornamental strokes seem less essen-

essential, provided that it can be done without running away from probability.

As we require graces in the actor 'even in places where he is copying the very defects of nature, which render the characters that are possess'd of them in some degree absurd and preposterous, much more will it be allow'd us to do so, when the player is to represent persons who are render'd ridiculous only by some foible of a higher kind, and especially if they are such as are to interest our thoughts in the conduct of the play.

In many characters the innocent and the ingenuous graces are the most proper, the most essential and striking; in others, the great, the noble and the commanding, are the more proper for the purpose. Love wounds all hearts in the same manner; and the effects which its attacks produce are much the same in all sorts of men; yet the pains it occasions are felt differently according to the different circumstances of education, birth and temper: and their effects are therefore to be express'd differently by the actor, when playing characters different in these respects.

It is to the honour of the present actresses of the English stage, that they express this difference better than perhaps those of any age have done, and in general, greatly better than the men: love, in the mouths of many of our first actors, is much the same thing whether it be offer'd to an inferior, a superior, or an equal; but *Mrs. Gibber* and *Mrs. Woffington*, are well enough acquainted with that passion under the most different circumstances, to have a peculiar turn of mind for each; they can add all the  
graces

graces of gratitude and humility to love, when it has a superior for its object ; all the insolence and affected disdain that pride itself could inspire, when it is offered from a inferior, and is to be return'd to him ; and know the just gradations by which they may descend to countenance a passion by a return, and even to give an air of dignity to the weakness they are to acknowledge on such occasions.

Some people have been so fond of an imaginary difference between the genteel and low comedy, as to suppose that the making us laugh was the sole province and prerogative of the latter, and that pleasantry was incompatible with dignity of character in the other : but there need no words to prove the contrary of this to those who have an opportunity of seeing Mrs. *Woffington* in the character of *Berinthia*.

It is scarce a less error to suppose, as some do, that the graces we have been recommending to the attention of the player who wishes to excel in comedy, are peculiar to the higher characters in it, and that no performer has any business with them, who acts any thing less than the capital parts. We expect more or less of them in almost every character ; every object that can be offer'd to us is capable of some kind of perfection ; and it is an universal law of the stage, that nothing should be presented on it that is not as perfect as it can be in its nature : every player is to make his character resemble that of people in the way of life out of which the author has taken it, but then he is to make the resemblance as perfect and at the same time as agreeable as he can ; he is a kind of portrait painter, whose business it is always to draw a handsome likeness : we except  
those



those characters which the authors have meant to affect us in the contrary manner ; and setting these aside, every thing that is represented on the stage is to be represented in its fairest light.

## C H A P. XIX.

*Observations on some Parts of the Art of Playing, of a subordinate Kind to those we have hitherto been treating of.*

AFTER we have attempted to describe severally the more eminent parts of the player's art, it remains that we speak of some others less worthy our regard, yet not less necessary to persons in the profession.

In the preceding chapters we have considered what is essential to an actor relatively to the characters which he has to represent ; we shall in this, take into consideration what he ought to be careful of, independently of the effect that he expects this or that particular character, which he acts, should produce.

Of whatever nature he intends that effect to be, he can never succeed in it without a distinct articulation of voice.

The power of marking to an audience, by several judicious pauses, the sense of what is spoken, and of giving to every part of a sentence only just so much time as it ought to have, is not less essential to the delivery than the care of being articulate. Nothing can be so provoking as to find a noble sentiment converted into nonsense or absurdity in the mouth of the speaker ; and yet this is a provocation that no man ever saw the masque of *Cornus*, or the tragedy of *Othello*, perform'd

form'd without, for these twenty years in the subordinate parts; while, as to the principal characters, we have seen them perform'd by one whose thorough sense of their beauties seems to declare him able even to have wrote them. The editions of our plays are many of them so faulty, that what we charge upon the performers ought often rather to be laid upon the books they study their parts in: a man may very well be able to play a third or fourth character, even in tragedy, who is not qualify'd to criticise upon the blunders of an editor; the care of this matter is much too weighty for the officer in a company on whom it is generally laid, that is, the prompter; and it would be very prudent in many of our players, where the sense seems dubious to them in any part, to refer themselves to some person of judgment who might be able to put them in the way of delivering what they are uncertain about, much better than it is possible they otherwise should, by explaining it to them, if right; or otherwise, by correcting the false pointing, or whatever other fault of the edition it may be obscur'd by.

There falls likewise in the way of the player; another kind of punctuation, if it may be so call'd; which has nothing to do with grammar or syntax, and yet is of almost as much consequence to him as the other; we may call this the premonitory punctuation for long sentences; this gives rules for the carefully managing a *rest*, in such manner that the persons may be able, after it, to deliver a long series of words, which ought, according to their sense, to be spoken without interruption, without an unnatural stopping to take breath.

The

The greatest players of the present age are not without their faults; and what is still more unhappy is, that they are the last of all people to mend them: we have observ'd, in Mr. *Garrick*, a fault from his very first appearance on the stage, which is grown up with him, and now much worse than at first; it is a way of resting in the middle of a line where the sense is continued; such a pause is unnatural and hateful. We can easily see that the reason of this is, that this actor has an ambition to give a peculiar emphasis to every word of a sentence where he would be peculiarly great in his part; the force of voice which he uses on this occasion requires so much breath to every syllable, that he cannot pronounce more than half a line together. We first observ'd this in him in *King Richard*; where, in the heat of his fury, he calls out to the archers,

Draw, archers, draw your arrows to the head.

It is easy to see that a line like this ought to be spoken with rapidity, and the whole force of the voice reserv'd for the last word; instead of this, Mr. *Garrick* bestows so much breath on the three first, that he is forc'd to pause to get in more to speak the rest with, and accordingly he pronounces the line with an unnatural gap in the middle,

Draw, archers, draw—your arrows to the head.

He has not only never mended this fault, but he has fallen into many others of a like kind; any one who remembers him in the late character  
of

of the *Black Prince* in the new tragedy of the *Battle of Poitiers*, must remember more than twenty lines in which he made the same unnatural error.

Whoever particularly remembers this speech will recollect the several pauses of this unnatural kind which we mark in them,

We'll face these numbers, fight them, bravely  
fall,

E're stoop to linger——loathsome life away  
In infamy and bondage. Sir, I thank you,  
I thank you from my soul, for these, for me,  
That we have met your wish to do us kindness;  
But for the terms our foes demand, we scorn  
Such vile conditions, and defy their swords.

Tell 'em, my lord, their hope's too proudly  
plum'd,

We must be conquer'd--ere they call us captives.

Famine and slaughter; let them both advance,  
In all their horrid most tremendous forms,  
They'll meet in us with men who'll starve,  
bleed, die,

Ere wrong their country or their own renown.

Sound there——to arms.

Three false pauses of this kind, in the compass of so few lines, offend us so much from so eminent an actor, that we should not be just to ourselves and to the public if we did not remind him of it.

But it is not enough that the player articulate all his words distinctly, and pronounce them with the proper rests, according to the laws of punctuation; he must be peculiarly careful also to keep up the conclusions of his speeches. It is natural for the strength of the voice to fail after delivering a  
whole



whole sentence ; but if the actor be not careful to avoid this defect, all the justness of speaking in the world will never get him reputation. If we lose the last word of a phrase, it is often impossible for us to see all the force of the sense, or to perceive the allusion the author meant to give us in it to something it refers to.

As it is of consequence to us to lose no part of what the player delivers, it is of little less that we hear him also with pleasure. We have already deliver'd the grand rules towards his giving an audience that satisfaction, but we have not yet enumerated every thing which may hinder his succeeding in it.

Would the actor please universally in his speaking, let him remember that an indolent manner of delivery, a frequent and audible catching of breath in a sentence, a habit of giving too hissing a sound to the letter S, which so often recurs in our language, and an affectation of giving weight and force to every syllable of a sentence, are not less blemishes in speaking, than a constant sameness of motion in the hands, is in acting.

We live in an age when men judge so very differently from one another, and when every one is so very willing to judge for himself, that we daily see absurdities of the most contrary kinds among the actors who are upon the stage in the same scene : while one player is pedantic in the affecting thus to give strength to every word, whether it require it or not, another makes his part appear cold and insipid to us, by neglecting to give that force which is requisite to such words in a sentence as the strength of the expression peculiarly depends on.

The

The necessity which every player, who would speak well, is under, of giving a peculiar force to certain words in a sentence, is not universal, or at least it is not equal in all parts, even in tragedy. It peculiarly belongs to those persons who represent the principal and most interesting characters. We have already observ'd in discoursing on what is call'd bye-play, that the degree of force in the expression in every actor ought to be proportion'd to the degree of interest which the character he represents has in the play; and in the same manner the delivery ought always to be more or less strong, according to the more or less considerable figure the person makes in the piece.

They are very much mistaken therefore who suppose that the case is just the same in a dialogue that is to be spoken, and in one which is to be deliver'd in music; or that an actor in answering a speech ought to take up the same tone, accent, and manner with the person who speaks to him: without doubt it is necessary that every comedian speak loud enough to be heard; and it is evident from this that there is a modulation of the voice as to strength, below which they are never to sink, because if they do, every thing they say is lost to a great part of the audience; but this is all the general resemblance we require between the manner of the two different people who speak together.

Perhaps indeed it is necessary in scenes of pure reasoning, or in those between two persons who are actuated by the same impression, that both use the same tone and modulation of voice in speaking; but on all other occasions variety is  
more

more agreeable, more natural, and there is no rule for the forbidding it.

It is much better that the two persons in every dialogue, except these, speak in two different tones of voice; it gives vivacity as well as variety, and is in all respects infinitely preferable to a heavy sameness, both in tragedy and in comedy.

The performers in tragedy ought in a particular manner to observe this variety of modulation of their voices in the dialogue; they have one reason for it, and that almost an universal one, which the others have not; a subject, be his rank or degree ever so high, yet in speaking to his king he always throws into his tone of voice the subordination and distance that he observes in his actions; and we may expect the same difference on the stage between the manner of speaking of the hero, and of his confident.

The action of the player, as well as his recitation, has also something mechanical in it; we may regard in this light the necessity he is under of conforming to certain rules prescrib'd for his gestures, but which it has not yet fallen in our way to consider.

In the part of a player whose character is intended to interest and affect us, the gestures must not only be, as we have before observ'd, natural, expressive, noble, and varied occasionally, but it is necessary also that they be more or less freely us'd, according to the length and nature of the passages he delivers; they must succeed one another by a kind of natural connexion; they must have an evident alliance together, and each must obviously appear to be the necessary sequel of that which preceded it, and the preparatory or introductory one to that which follows: the player  
P must

must particularly observe that the peculiar gesture which he uses to accompany the period of a sentence does not terminate but with the last word, and that the rest of the hand, as well as of the voice, declares that the person has done speaking. Beside these, there are a number of other rules equally invariable; among the rest we may mention that of avoiding too frequently those gestures that serve to mark the most strongly and forcibly such parts of a sentence as require it: the prudent use of these gives a peculiar strength to the expression, but the continual abuse of them will give the noblest speech an air of puerility: there are a thousand other necessary regulations in the gesture which are too trivial and obvious to have a place here; a due attention to good examples will give the young player the best instructions about them.

The art of treading the stage, especially in tragedy, is another of the mechanical parts of the business of an actor, and is particularly of use to inform him how to fill the stage in a soliloquy: we shall refer the young player in this article to the same means of instruction, a good example. The antient comedians who, we are told, mov'd by sudden jerks and springs on the stage, are justly condemn'd for it: in comedy, he who can walk across a room like a gentleman will be able to do the same on the stage; but in tragedy there is something more requir'd, and it would be well if every player who performs a principal part in that way, would practise for the stage a walk that should be much below the mimic dignity of the theatrical strut of the last age, and yet somewhat more noble than the common step.



## C H A P. XX.

## O B J E C T I O N S.

**N**Otwithstanding the evidence that the principles we have deliver'd carry with them, it is not impossible but some players may continue to imagine that their profession is much easier than we pretend, and that there are very few difficulties in the way of the man who would rise to the very first character in it. Children, they will observe, are frequently applauded on the stage, and yet it is impossible they should have all the perfections which we have affirm'd to be necessary to a player.

It will require very little trouble to answer this objection: we are not to deny that we have now and then instances of præmature talents: a happy natural disposition, a careful and well manag'd education, and continual practice, may sometimes supply the want of years; and it will not appear wonderful that children so form'd for the stage should sometimes know better what they are about, than some who are grown old upon it, as they may perhaps have taken more pains in the few years they have study'd the profession, than the others in their whole lives: examples however of children's deserving great applause upon the stage are rare, tho' their having some is common: in general we applaud them as children, rather than as players, and rather admire the conditions under which they know what they do, than that they know it. Most of those who have been best received among us, with much more merit, and a few more

years over their heads, would appear much worse than they do under the advantage of so young a time of life.

A second objection to the difficulty of attaining the art of playing, will perhaps be made in regard to the actresses, since it is evident, people will say, that women who have pass'd their lives in idleness and debauchery, have often risen to the character of very great players. In order to argue justly on this point, we are first to enquire whether the persons thus applauded on the stage, have really had that merit which the applause they receive seems to allow in them: we have prov'd, in the beginning of this treatise, that many players have much better understandings than the world supposes them to have, and that, in general, people who are well receiv'd, as players, either have natural accomplishments which we don't see, or they have taken pains that we don't know of; or if neither of these by the case, that the applause is given them undeservedly, and we are therefore not to allow it as any evidence of merit: we shall on this occasion go yet farther and observe, that even with the advantage of a good understanding, if a woman does not improve herself by application and study, she will never arrive at any degree of perfection.

Let it be own'd that an actress whose course of life has been such as allow'd her no time for the study of her business, has yet charm'd the people who saw her play, we are not to conclude from this that she had a vast deal of merit; the multitude are easily deceiv'd, especially when there is a good face in the way; suppose even the poets have extoll'd the merit of such an actress, we ought no more to judge from this than from the  
other,

other, they may have been seduc'd by the same means with the rest of the world ; and it may be added, we have known poets who have been as little judges of playing as the beaux themselves ; and that the heart may have been in many cases charm'd instead of the understanding.

A third objection, more formidable than either of these, may be rais'd from what passes every hour of our lives before us among the generality of mankind ; we see people who have never study'd speaking, yet in common conversation giving the proper tone of voice, and the proper accent to every sentiment ; and it will be ask'd, Why may not the player as well do this justice to the sentiments which are given him to deliver on the stage, without all this apparatus which we have deliver'd as necessary in order to it ?

Our answer to this objection will be short. The man whom we observe in speaking to have the most just, regular, and varied inflexions of voice, often reads very ill, even his own writings ; and they who read well will allow, that there requires a great deal of time and practice to arrive at the art of reading many things as they ought to be read ; particularly fables, stories, or plays written in rhyme and measure. Our clergy, tho' they generally speak well in common conversation, yet frequently read their sermons so ill, that people are induc'd to suspect they are not their own. If there are so many difficulties, as hence it appears there certainly are, in barely reading more than in common speaking, how many must there needs be in playing, which is to common reading what a finish'd picture is to a first rough draught in chalk ?

## C H A P. XXI.

*Some Remarks which may be of Service to certain modern Actors.*

THE more difficulty there is in the representation of dramatic writings, the more necessary it is to the player to know his own strength, and not to attempt any thing beyond what he may be able to go through.

The *English* stage has from time to time shew'd us a kind of *Proteus's* capable of assuming every form they pleas'd, and of excelling in every different branch of their profession; we have seen in Mr. *Garrick*, a genius capable of all things that the stage can require, able to charm us in every character from *Richard III.* to *Abel Drugger*, and equally form'd to affect, to entertain, and divert us, equally able to make us laugh, and to call forth our tears: one would be apt to say that nature has crowded several different men into this little body.

We have some players who, if they would keep themselves within their proper bounds, would be able to do a great deal, but, who attempting, after the example of these masterly actors, to fall into every thing, can never excel in any thing, but remain middling in every character they attempt.

Others we have of a more modest turn, who chuse for themselves only one kind of characters, and bend all their study to excel in those; but very unluckily for some of these, we find that they have fixed upon that set of characters, which nature has of all others the least qualify'd them for excel-



excelling in. An actress perhaps has a good understanding, a readiness in her manner, and a great deal of the finessè of playing appropriated to genteel comedy. She excels in characters of this stile, and must always do so. She wants that pertness that characterises the people cut out for the *Phyllis's* of the stage: But if she will perform the *Phyllis* and neglect the *Lady Townley*, what is she to expect for this, but the contempt she deserves?

Out of hope of succeeding in these characters, tho' she have neither the necessary elevation of soul, nor sufficient command of voice for tragedy, she will attempt that; and tho' of all people in the world not cut out for the sublime, or the pathetick, she will speak the words intended to convey such Ideas. The audience, captivated with the sight of a fine figure dress'd to a peculiar advantage, forget the player and applaud the woman: She misinterprets the praise, and fancies all the heroines of the stage are nothing to her, till falling into some one of her old and proper parts again, she is awak'd to a sense of herself, by finding the applause there double to what it was before.

A player of the other sex has a great strength of voice and force of expression. He is cut out by nature to perform the general or the hero, but he will be nothing but the lover. *Cato* would sound well from his mouth, but his heart will think of nothing but *Juba*. Another is cut out by nature to be useful rather than ornamental on the stage; he is form'd only for the subaltern characters, but he will act none but those of kings and heroes. We have seen more than one player ruin'd by this sort of folly:

Where the interests of a company give such a man a power of chusing, or where he finds the way to the weak side of a manager, the credit of the whole body suffers by it.

A man of great use at one of the theatres was some time since going to run in a rage to the other house, because where he was, they offer'd him only second characters, and in the other where they wanted him, he was to play many of the first: He consulted a friend on the subject, who had sincerity enough to tell him that he was cut out by nature for the second characters, not for the first, and wou'd get much more reputation by such, than by setting himself upon a footing with *Garrick*, and with *Quin*, and giving an opportunity to a comparison in which he must make a very bad figure: He, by his honest advice, retain'd him where he was, and where he is respected to this day. A second, favour'd considerably more than he deserved in the same company, and deaf to every thing but the offer of the first parts, pursu'd his road of vanity, and is gone. To what purpose? to be despis'd and laugh'd at in first characters, instead of being applauded and esteem'd in those he was qualify'd for.

### The C O N C L U S I O N.

To what has been said in this treatise, we might add the examination of many other questions relative to the subject, and which may be naturally enough started from reading what we have said of it. Some of the principal of these, it may be not amiss to answer. We have just observed of some particular players, that the  
choice

choice of parts seems altogether a matter of indifference in regard to them; that they are equally cut out for all, and able to command the same applause in all; it may be asked however, whether a player of this kind wou'd not have excell'd yet much more, if instead of playing tragedy and comedy alternately, he had apply'd himself solely to one of them? The custom of the present times requires it indeed of the player to be able to do both; but it wou'd certainly be better in general if the best performers wou'd confine themselves to one of the two so very different branches of their profession; each of them requiring a long and labour'd application and study in order to the executing it well; and the one often requiring accomplishments so very different from those necessary to the other. The man who is wholly unfit to succeed in the one, is yet often cut out well enough for shining in the other: Nay, we may go so far as to affirm it impossible for the same man to excell in tragedy, and to be as perfect in some parts in the comic writings, as others of infinitely less talents, only better appropriated to those parts, may be.

We all remember the late Mr. *Hippisley's* merit in comedy, yet perhaps no body ever wish'd to see him in the buskin; and we cannot but acknowledge that Mr. *Yates* at present plays the part of the *Lying Valet* vastly better even than Mr. *Garrick*, tho' it is a character of that gentleman's own writing; yet we shou'd hold the former of these in a very contemptible light if he were for this reason to attempt to rival the other in *Macbeth* or in *Hamlet*.

We remember Mr. *Delane* to have charm'd us in *Alexander*; and in *Hotspur* to have excell'd every

every body in that character; but we were not quite so fond of the figure he made in a *Viscount Airmvell*. The man who has a strength of voice and dignity of figure proper for such characters as the former, wou'd certainly play them better if never taken off by things less fit for him; and this gentleman's reputation wou'd unquestionably have been much higher than it was, and the manager of the house he belong'd to wou'd have been a greater gainer by him, if he had play'd only these sort of characters; and another, whom we need not name, had never been suffer'd to rant and roar away, in what he thinks the majesty of tragedy, that credit he might have obtain'd by confining himself to the parts he was first tolerably receiv'd in.

When we remember the manner in which Mr. *Delane* spoke his resolution to deny the king his prisoners, and his determination to torment and plague him.

I'll keep them all,  
 By heaven he shall not have a Scot of them;  
 No, if a Scot would save his soul he shall not.  
 He said he wou'd not ransom *Mortimer*.  
 Forbid my tongue to speak of *Mortimer*,  
 But I will find him when he lies asleep,  
 And in his ear I'll hollow *Mortimer*.  
 All studies here I solemnly defy  
 Save how to gall and pinch this *Bolingbroke*.

or the force and fire with which he delivered the speech; a line or two of which we have quoted against a very different sort of player in a former part of this work.

By



By heaven methinks it were an easy leap,  
To pluck bright honour from the pale fac'd moon,  
Or dive into the bottom of the deep,  
Where fathom line cou'd never touch the  
ground ;  
And pluck up drowned honour by the locks.  
So he that doth redeem her thence might wear  
Without corival all her dignities.

We cannot but wish he had never been confin'd to speak any other language.

A second question may be propos'd here as arising naturally from the former. Is it more easy for a player to distinguish himself in tragedy or in comedy ? To this it may be answer'd, the natural advantages which an audience equally expects to find the players in tragedy and in comedy possess'd of, ought however always to be more eminent, and more perfect in their kind, in those in the former way, than they need be in those who act in the latter. There are also beside these advantages which are requir'd in common to both, some that are peculiar to the player in tragedy, and are much more rare than the others ; the natural consequence of this is, that we meet with more people in the world cut out for shining in comedy, than for excelling in tragedy. 'Tis equally certain however, that the care of the gestures and deportment are of as much consequence to the comedian as to the tragedian ; and require as much study and attention for the one as for the other ; and that as to the finesses of playing, which are of the number of the most difficult articles in the profession, they require more from the comedian than

than from the other. We speak here of the finesses requir'd in the nicer scenes ; for as to the parts where there is no great theatrical action necessary, or which are mere conversations and reasonings, these may be always play'd with much success, and with little trouble, even by players of a very moderate share of merit, provided they have a little knowledge of the world, and a tolerable understanding.

Upon the whole, ~~there~~<sup>each</sup> are peculiar requisites to the excelling in <sup>each</sup> way ; but those necessary to the playing tragedy, are more numerous, and are either more difficultly acquir'd, or more rarely had from nature ; and thence we are to conclude that the excelling in this way, is what much fewer people can pretend to than in the other.

Supposing an actor devotes himself principally to tragedy, what sort of characters will he find it most easy to excell in ? Those of *Shakespeare*, or those of the later writers, *Rowe*, *Otway*, and the rest ? The player is in a great measure able to answer this question to himself. He will find the one appear much more natural and easy to him than the other, and on examining his own natural accomplishments, he will easily perceive which of them he is the most calculated for. If he have a great deal of tenderness in his temper, and be naturally of an amorous turn ; he will succeed most easily with the latter authors : If he find the great and the majestick strike more strongly upon him ; and feel himself affected by nature as dress'd up with scarce any ornaments but her own ; and if to this he have *force* and *feeling* in a considerable

ble degree, *Shakespear* is the author he ought to study, and will most excell in playing.

From the answers we have given to these three natural and important questions, it may be concluded, that in order to a play's being represented in the greatest perfection, it is necessary to have people in the company not only qualify'd for performing in all kinds of pieces, but also for every particular kind of parts in each.

From this consequence we shall draw another, which may serve as a conclusion to this treatise: We are apt to complain that some of our very good actors, who from the necessities of the houses are obliged to play an almost infinite number of different characters, are not quite so excellent in some of them, as they are in others. But we misapply the wonder; we ought, on the contrary, to be surpriz'd, that being oblig'd to be continually studying new parts, they play so many as they do extremely well. Let us honestly and candidly then change our sentiments on this subject, and instead of censuring them for succeeding less in some of their parts, give them the praise they deserve, for performing well in so many.

Another thing that the modern audiences for their own sakes ought also to avoid, is the severity we see sometimes us'd in discouraging young players who attempt great characters, and do not succeed in them quite so well as those who have perform'd them a hundred times oftener: We ought to encourage in these aspiring genius's, provided they have some merit and the necessary requisites from nature, that ambition which tho' too forward at present, will very probably in time shew them the way to our highest applauses.

Another

Another thing which we ought as carefully to avoid, is the too common folly of admiring the actors of an age or two ago, much more than they were admir'd while living ; and looking upon every thing that is done now as inferior to what was perform'd in their time.

'Tis a very discouraging circumstance to an actor to know, that do what he will, he is still to be look'd on as inferior to some body else who is dead, and therefore cannot be brought to the test of comparison. There is great reason to believe that we have at least five or six players at present equal to any of those we hear so greatly commended, and we ought, in justice to ourselves and them, to own it.

Where our complaints are just, and we have room to think they may occasion the amendment of errors, let us not spare them : Let us acknowledge that among the capital parts of the modern theatre, some ought to be play'd with more truth, others with more spirit, and some with more graces : But let us not deceive ourselves so far as to suppose that there were not grounds for wishes of the same kind in the days of *Wilks*, of *Booth* and *Betterton*.

F I N I S.









# DATE DUE

SEP 19 1984			
OCT 15 1985		APR 7 8 1985	
NOV 22 1985		NOV 4 1985	
MAR - 6 1986		DEC 5 1985	
		MAR 16 1986	
APR 3 - 1986		APR 2 1986	
		APR 13 1986	
ADD 1 6 1986		MAR 14 1987	
FEB - 8 1987			
FEB 10 1987		FEB 29 1988	
MAR 30 1989		MAR 26 1989	
APR - 7 1990		APR 23 1990	
		APR 30 2000	
		APR 30 2000	
201-6503		Printed in USA	



UVic-M



3 2775 011 876 22 3

Actor;

PN 2061 H55

PN2061

H55

Hill, John

The actor.

